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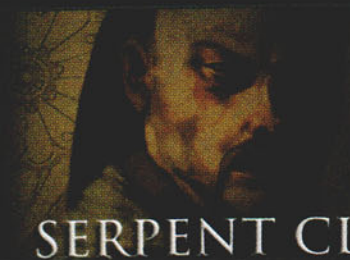

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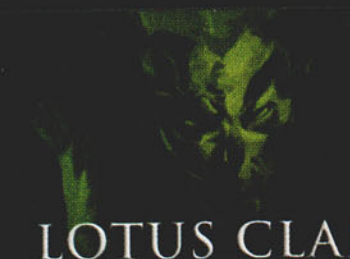

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Cover artist Carlo Arellano chose a captivating Middle Eastern undead hunter as his subject for this evocative piece. A frequent contributor to DRAGON Magazine, *I'm sure that after reading this issue you'll approach the creepy parts of your game as freshly as Carlo approaches his subjects.*

—Peter Whitley

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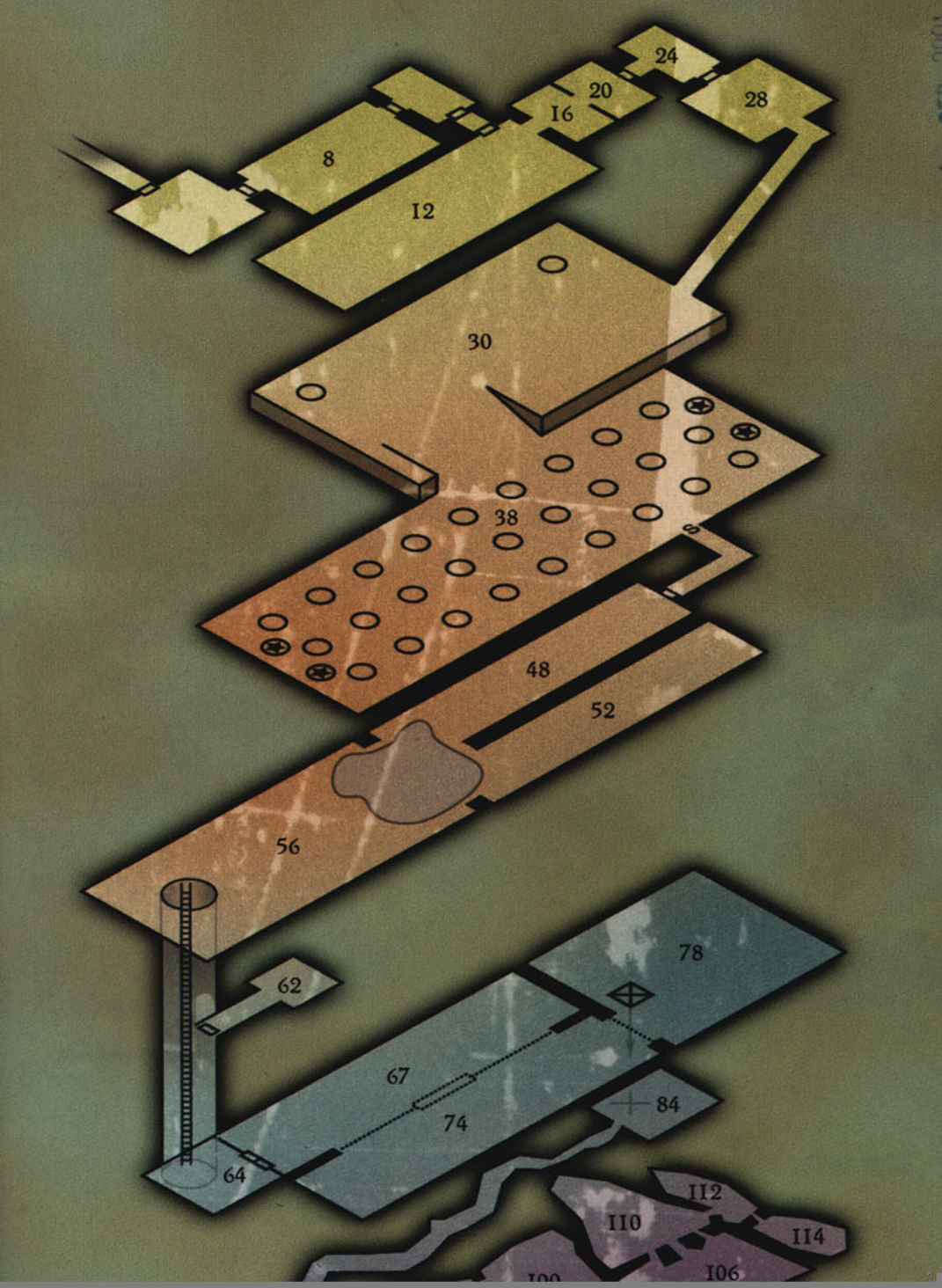

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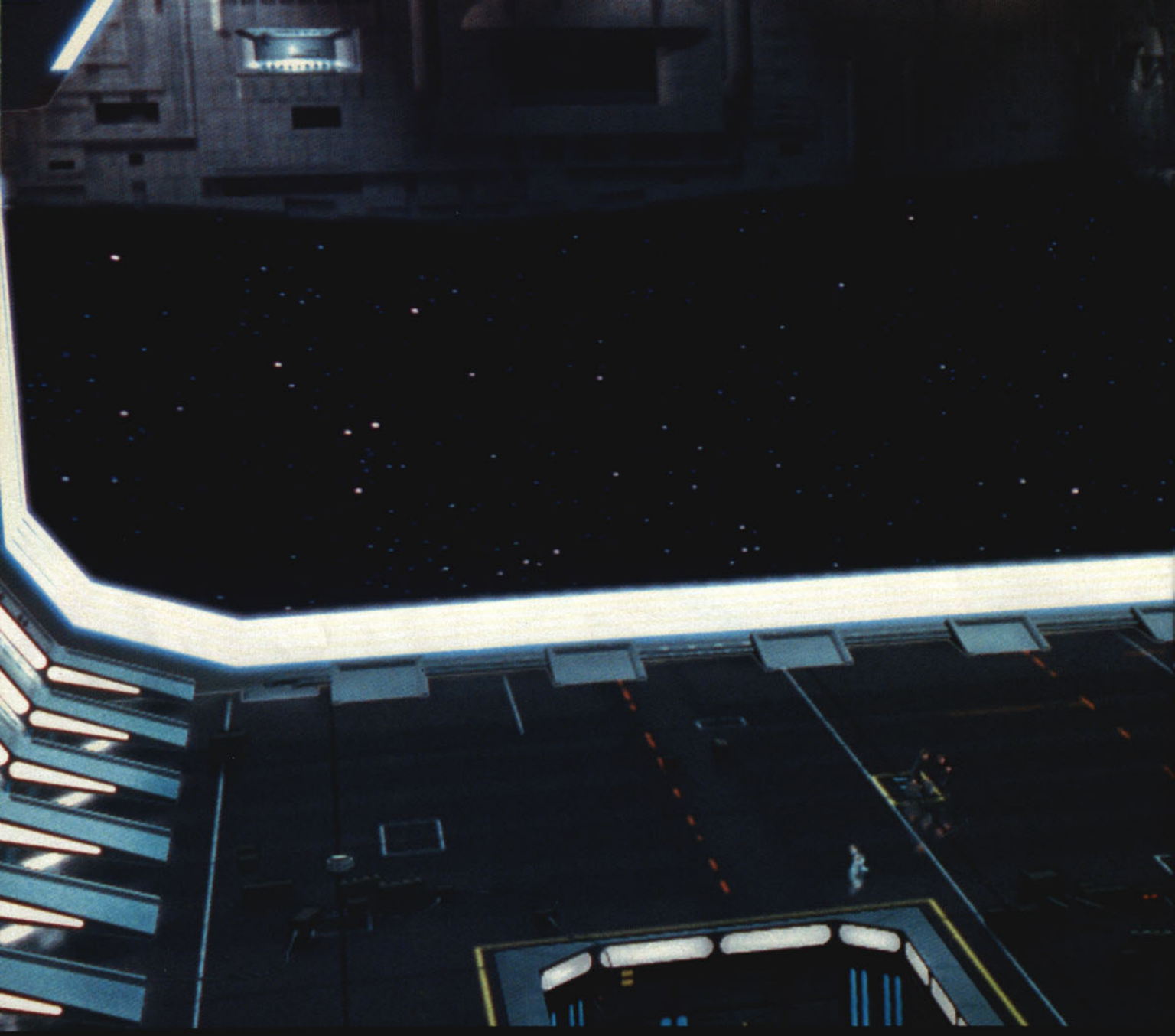

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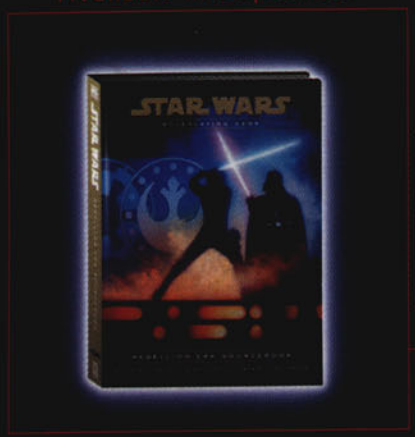

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I think I'm alone now

Combat is my favorite part of D&D, and in my book, the spookier combat encounters are the better they are. I know however, that combats are the hardest part of the game to keep scary—once players start dealing damage to a dragon, it rapidly becomes less frightening than when all the players saw of it were huge claw marks in a stone wall. Preserving a sense of fear through every encounter isn't right for every campaign, but most games benefit from an occasional infusion of dread.

Introducing a touch of horror into a combat encounter can be tough. One of the most successful tricks I've used is isolating players. In a recent game, the main villain, a 9th-level vampire cleric, used the *wall of stone* spell to great effect. Twice he snuck up on the party and dropped a wall between the rearmost character and the next in line. The isolated character, now thoroughly terrified, could hear his companions yelling and pounding against the wall while they tried to break through to help their companion. Their frantic efforts only increased the tension. Knowing that they were facing a vampire, one of the players with the main group started yelling to the isolated character, urging him not to turn around because he'd have to face the vampire's domination gaze.

Once a character is isolated, his sense of vulnerability is heightened, and he's almost guaranteed to get a little scared, but this trick shouldn't be used often. A series of bad die rolls from an isolated player, and suddenly you've got a dead character. Know too that one character is capable of dealing with at *most* one creature with CR equal to his level. It's better by far to pit isolated characters against creatures with a CR one or two ranks below the character's level. Using the trick sparingly preserves its impact too—the first time a character has to face the vampire alone, it's frightening. The second time, it starts to become routine, and the trick looses its punch. The only reason that the vampire trick worked twice in my campaign is that I didn't let the players know what happened to the first character, allowing their fears to grow as they waited for the vampire's next attack.

I didn't plan it this way, but the vampire's tactics spooked the rest of the party too. Once the second character was taken (the party busted through the *wall of stone* to find an empty passage both times) the rest of the group started to fear being picked off one by one.

There are plenty of other ways to put a little scare into the players during combat. What techniques have you (or your DM) used to frighten the players in the midst of combat?

As much as I love scary combats, I have to digress. Fifty-five issues, five annuals, two corporate buy-outs, and one funny little good-bye letter since he first appeared on *Dragon Magazine's* masthead as editor, Dave Gross has moved on. In case you missed his "dear Dragon" letter last issue, he's not going far (he hasn't even moved out of his cubicle); he's just moving from *Dragon* to work as editor-in-chief for both of Wizards of the Coast's *Star Wars* magazines, *Star Wars Insider* and *Star Wars Gamer*.

Those of you who like how the magazine's grown in the last five years shouldn't worry too much. Dave hired and trained nearly everyone on the magazine's current staff, and his influence will remain. Dave is, however, a little sad that he's not working on D&D full time anymore. You can help him out by sending a description of your character to vader@wizards.com.

Jesse Decker
Editor-in-Chief

DRAGON

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Dragon Magazine (ISSN# 1062-2101) is published monthly by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., 1801 Lind Ave. SW, Renton, WA 98055, United States of America. Periodicals Postage Paid at Renton, WA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO *Dragon Magazine*, P.O. BOX 469107, ESCONDIDO, CA 92046.

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SCALE MAIL

City of Splendor

I have been a D&D player and DM for almost 21 years. This is the first time I have sent a letter to "Scale Mail." I still run a Victorian-style campaign by adapting the *Masque of the Red Death* Campaign Setting to the new edition rules.

I have used many sources over the years, from history textbooks to *National Geographic* magazine, but the most useful information I've found comes from your "Cities of the Ages" articles. I am impressed with the obvious amount of research done, and the maps of the cities are fantastic. I now have photocopies of those articles along with my D&D books, my Masque of the Red Death box set, and some material for Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* RPG (London and Cairo by Gaslight, respectively).

I want to make sure that *Dragon* keeps up the good work in this article, and I hope that it stays around for a long time to come. Thank you for all your hard work.

Jonathan M Thompson
Bossier City, Louisiana

What About Greyhawk?

This is the first time I have written to your magazine, although I have been reading it for years. I would like to start off by stating that I thoroughly enjoy your new format, especially the "Up On A Soapbox" series by Gary Gygax. I always enjoyed "What's New" in the old *Dragon*, and am extremely happy to see it has returned in the new. Also, the "Powerplays" within "Sage Advice" have helped out some of my new players trying to decide which race and class to play.

Overall, the entire new *Dragon* is excellent. However, there is one thing that has been bothering me that I must ask you about: What happened to Greyhawk?

I have been playing since the original Basic Set back in 1979, and have been using the Greyhawk campaign setting almost exclusively ever since getting the *World of Greyhawk* boxed set back in 1983 (I still have it, books, poster maps, and all). I was getting discouraged with 2nd Edition because almost all of the published modules were either generic or for Birthright or Forgotten Realms. Finally, right before the announcement of the new edition, Wizards of the Coast began to reintroduce the Greyhawk setting. As the new edition was released, it appeared that Greyhawk was going to be the primary setting. The new Greyhawk sourcebooks and modules were like a dream come true for me. Recently, however, your magazine has focused on the Forgotten Realms setting and Shannara with precious little devoted to Greyhawk. Is this going to continue, with Greyhawk being forgotten about, while numerous other campaign settings come and go (such as Birthright, Spelljammer, Maztica, Ravenloft, and so on), or will there be upcoming *Dragon Magazine* articles and modules for Greyhawk?

Looking through the old Greyhawk books, there are numerous adventure locations that could be utilized in articles similar to the "Elminster's Guide to the Realms" series (such as the Hanging Glacier of Alisedran, the Pits of Azak-Zil, Rigodruok, and so on). Numerous power groups also exist to be fleshed out and given revised stats (the Circle of Eight and Iuz's Bone-heart). The continent of Oerth is a marvelous and exciting region, and should not be left to gather dust on a shelf somewhere.

Wayne Shaver • Edmonton, Alberta

We love Greyhawk too. Starting with issue #290, you'll see more Greyhawk than ever before in the pages of Dragon Magazine.

share off your opinion

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Random Encounters

useful resources for every D&D player.

In *Dragon* #286 we suggested using Sculpey, a modeling clay substance, to create 3-D dungeon tiles. Reader Colin Wessel sent us some pictures of creations—including the large rats seen at right—that he's made with the Sculpey product, inspiring us to try our own hand at making models. Of course, ours didn't turn out as well as his, but Colin assures us that once you get used to working with the clay, each model you make will get better and better. Now, when you just can't seem to find a miniature for that nasty ettin or some other monster your PCs are soon to encounter, you can create your own! Sculpey, it's not just for dungeon tiles anymore.

Trendy Issues

After flipping through the latest issue of *Dragon* (#286), I have to say that I'm a little disappointed. Generally, the issues have enough differing content that I can spend several days going over the different ideas and articles, thoroughly enjoying myself and every page. I'm sure that Terry Brooks's Shannara series is very popular among gamers, but to devote every feature in an issue to it? I felt like I was looking at an extra 27 pages of ads for the upcoming new book rather than reading useful articles. I've looked back over the last several issues, and, of course, several of the features of each were of the same theme (halflings, dragons, clerics, and so on), but there were also features that covered topics other than the issue theme.

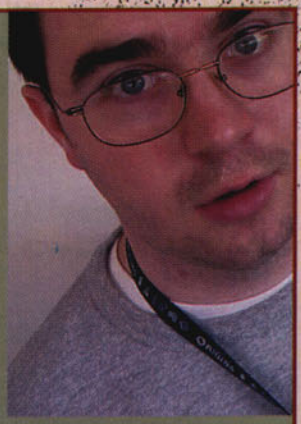
Another thing that shocked me was some of the artwork used. No offense to Dennis Cramer (especially considering that I couldn't draw if my handbooks depended on it), but his artwork, although impressive, seemed more appropriate for a comic book than *Dragon*.

Admittedly, the article on the nightcloak prestige class almost makes up for the other disappointments, but this doesn't do any good for someone who doesn't play Forgotten Realms. Although I play in the Forgotten Realms myself, and find the Faerûn information useful, I find myself agreeing with Chris Walsh (issue #286) about the need for more "how-to" articles.

There are a few things I liked: The Wizard's Workshop section is looking great (I make sure that my wife—a D&D newbie—reads "The Play's the Thing" from every new issue), and Nodwick was hysterical. I just hope this issue isn't going to set a trend for the upcoming issues.

Jack Flynn • Newark, DE

game face



Name: Jesse Decker
Alignment: Lawful min/maxer
Years Gaming: 17
Favorite Race: Gnomes—never gave 'em a fair chance until the new D&D game came out, now they're my favorite.
Favorite Class: Wizards—a scroll for every occasion.
Favorite Setting: Dungeons—dungeons in any world. Honest, give me a narrow stairway headed down into danger and I'm happy as can be.
Greatest Gaming Moment: During a recent playtest, my gnome wizard sent a *flaming sphere* down the chimney of a flour mill filled with bad guys. The resulting blast nearly killed the entire party, but what can I say—I like explosions.

Show us *your* game face. Send a photo and a brief description of your gaming background, including your "vital statistics" (years gaming, your "gaming alignment," favorite race, class, and setting) and a short description of your greatest gaming moment. Keep it all under 100 words, and you might see your mug right here. Send us your game face by post or email it to dragon@wizards.com.

The Sherwood campaign in issue #274 did start a trend, but not the trend you're afraid of. Although there's another campaign setting coming up soon (issue #290) from now on we'll stick to one a year. There might be a year where we decide to do two again, but it'll probably be a while before that happens.

A New World Series

Greetings:

I want to thank you for your articles on Terry Brooks's Shannara series. This is exactly the type of content I have always thought lacking in *Dragon Magazine*.

Sometimes it can be incredibly difficult to convert a book series into existing D&D rules and still make it playable. I definitely think it's a job best left to you experts at Wizards of the Coast. I was wondering, does your magazine have any plans to cover other book series in the future and convert them to the d20 format like you did with the Shannara series? If so, I have a few suggestions:

- The Belgariad series and the Mallorean series, by David Eddings
- The Sword of Truth series, by Terry Goodkind
- The Lord of the Rings series, by J.R.R. Tolkien

I would have mentioned Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time series, but there is already a whole game system based on this series coming out later this year.

Dragon needn't do these book series types of articles all the time, perhaps just once or twice a year. I feel that these articles provide other game opportunities that DMs don't often think about. Besides, even if you don't want to play in a particular world covered in an article, it still provides interesting monster and magic item ideas.

Sometimes it's nice to see something other than Forgotten Realms coverage. Not that I have anything against the Forgotten Realms, I frequently use its material for my own campaigns. But it was definitely great to see something different. Keep up the good work!

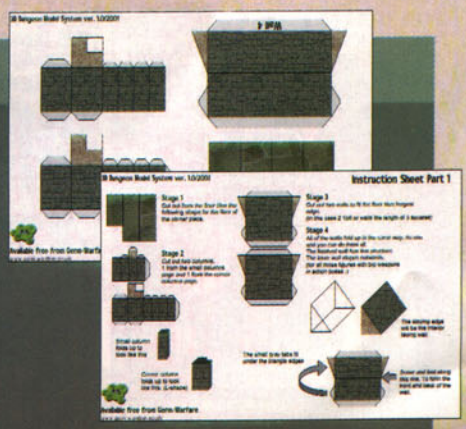
Don Ervin • Davidson, NC
snow_wolfe@hotmail.com

Gimme Drawings, not Blueprints

I am not very picky about what I want in a magazine as long as it is at least partially good. I know that you can't

random encounters

Speaking of 3-D dungeon tiles, if you want something a little less time-consuming than Sculpey, you'll want to check out reader Jeremey Claridge's website, which offers downloadable floorplans in pdf form. Once the floorplans are printed, cut and fold them according to the easy "building plans" Jeremey supplies. The floorplans come complete with textures, helping the cut-out models look even more dimensional and realistic. It is suggested that you print the floorplans onto 160 mg paper (you don't have to use thick card stock), and the finished product is strong enough to withstand a group of PC miniatures and the band of orcs they fight without collapsing. Go to www.germy.co.uk/fprpg.htm for more information and to download this handy DM's tool.



caption contest

Your caption writing style is no match for mine! Prove your worth! WRITE A CAPTION for this cartoon and send it to Caption/DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057 by November 1st. Cutting up your magazine is unnecessary. If you must include the drawing, employ your photocopy technique!

please everyone all the time, and that is why I accept some things in your magazine even if I don't particularly like them or don't find them useful. Which doesn't happen often, by the way. However, in your last issue of *DRAGON*, I found something that compelled me to write to you.

Just an hour before I started this letter I finished a very good magazine, *Dragon* #285. The specialty priest of Selûne was very nice, and was just the thing to add to my campaign, since Shar and Selûne are the central Gods in my story. The only thing I didn't like about the issue was the Wizard's Workshop column headers. I really liked the little pencil drawings that used to be at the top, but these new blueprint headers, which are basically the same thing over and over in a different color, really made that whole section of the magazine dull. Did it cost too much to have a separate header and background design for each column or did you actually think it looked better this way? I know there were people who complained about some of the backgrounds, saying that it was hard to read the text, but was it really that big of a problem? I thought it made the magazine look so much better.

Even if this letter never gets printed, could you at least consider changing it back? Maybe new drawings would make the columns look better, but please don't keep the blueprint art!

Samuel Terry • Princeton, WV

We changed it for two reasons: to make each article easier to find and to better reflect elements found while preparing your games rather than playing in them. We'll keep fiddling with it—we're always trying to improve.

It Slipped our Mind

I don't know if anyone has mentioned this or not, but I think there's a problem with the "Mind Flayers" puzzle in issue #283 on page 82.

I'm 99.9 percent certain that I've solved it. If I'm right, then there's a misspelling of the word "weird" in the word list.

Just wanted to point that out. Thanks, and I love your magazine!

Trendane Sparks • Santa Clara, CA

Oops. That's weird.

Outside the Box

I know that I am a little behind, but I just read the July issue (#285) and noticed Dave Gross's call for "halflings that have broken the mold." I have many such characters and would like to share one with you.

I have been a DM for over eight years and I enjoy having an NPC travel with the PCs. I try to keep these NPCs fresh and entertaining. In a current D&D campaign I run, my halfling NPC is a fighter. Nothing unusual. What makes him different is that he considers himself to be a knight and cavalier. He wears full plate, carries a long sword, rides a war dog, and uses a lance. He speaks with a Spanish-like accent and prides himself on being a "slayer of evil and champion of the weak."

Aklon is not my only unusual halfling; I have many, including a highly charismatic, womanizing psychic warrior. I think halflings are very entertaining if played properly and outside of the usual parameters.

Rod Gentle • Colorado Springs, Co

by Aaron Williams

PHEW! THEY BEEFED UP THE ZOMBIE POPULATION IN HERE SINCE OUR LAST VISIT.
NICE SLIP, IDIOT!
AH-HA! I KNEW YOU TWO WERE TOO FAMILIAR WITH THIS PLACE! WHEN DID YOU "LAST VISIT?"
WELL, PIFFANY WAS ON VACATION AND WE HEARD ABOUT THIS DUNGEON, SO WE HEADED HERE FOR A LOOK-SEE.
YOU WERE STILL IN THERAPY AFTER THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL, BUT WE FELT THAT WE REQUIRED YOUR HENCHLING SKILLS.
IS THAT WHY THIS ZOMBIE HAD SUCH A DISTINGUISHED LOOK ABOUT HIM?
UM, WELL, MY CLONE SCROLL WAS GOING TO EXPIRE WHEN THE THIRD EDITION CAME OUT...
NAUGHTY ARTAX!
AND WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER TWENTY-FIVE?
BEING CLERIC-LESS, WE HAD TO MAKE SURE THAT SOME-ONE WOULD SURVIVE TO CARRY OUR STUFF...
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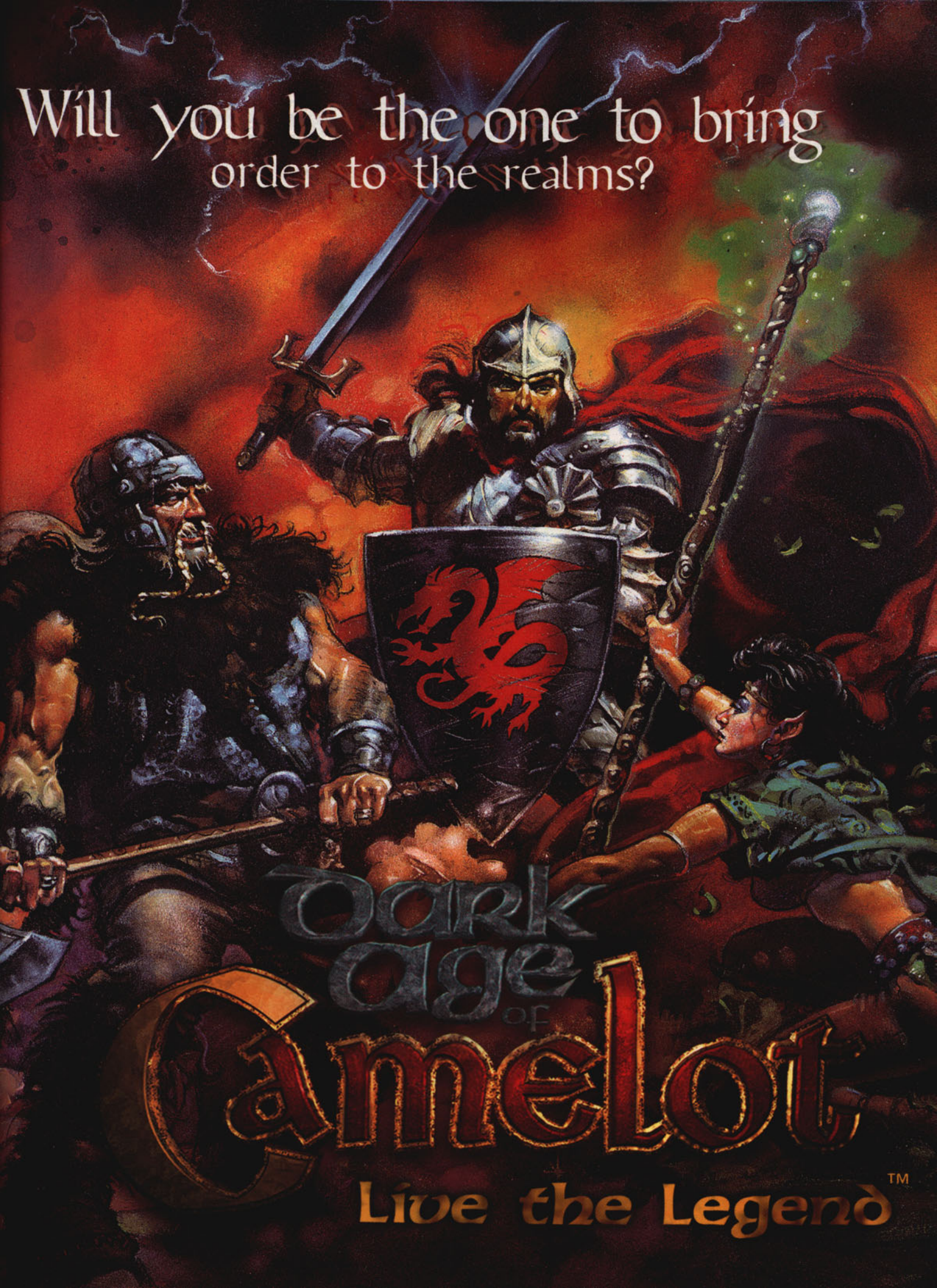
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Kensington Town Hall, London • Contact: Gameforce Ltd. • 18-20 Bromell's Road • London, England SW4 0BG • info@dragonmeet.co
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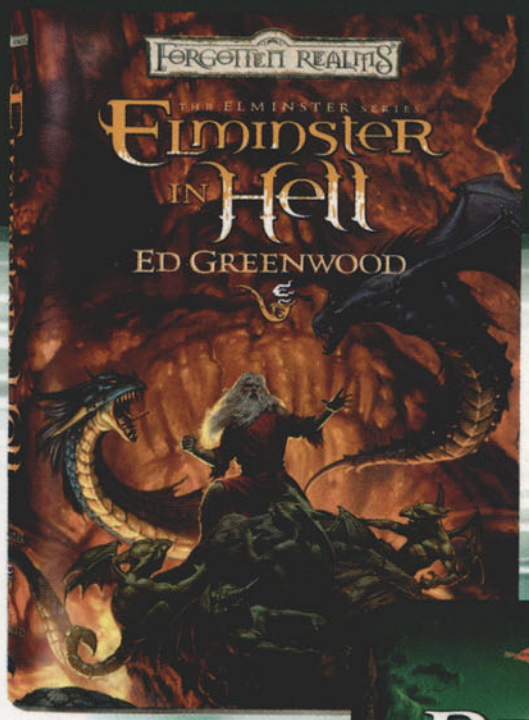

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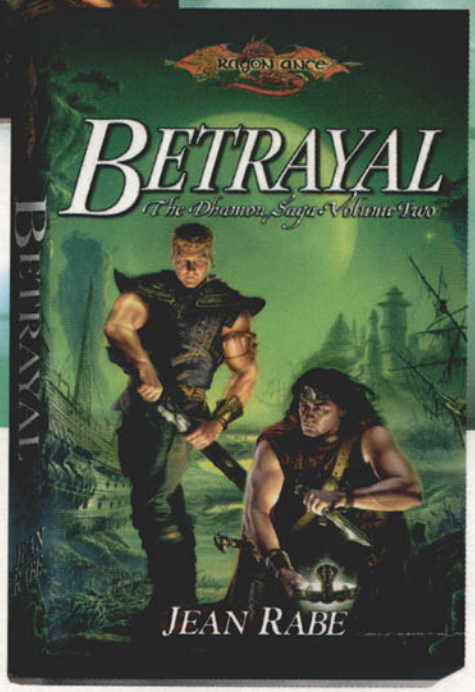

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UP ON A SOAPBOX BY GARY GYGAX

ALL I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM D&D

THUS SPAKE THE GREAT STONE FACE OF GREYHAWK DUNGEONS

THE ENIGMA CONQUERED

Readers who have seen the D&D game supplement, GREYHAWK, will possibly recall seeing a rather crude illustration (done by this writer, we were desperate for artwork) of The Great Stone Face, an Enigma of Greyhawk. This towering block of carved stone was located in a large open area of one of the mid-levels of the dungeon complex. Around its base were carved a circle of strange runes and pictograms. Located where it was, so large as to demand attention, the Great Stone Face served exactly as planned.

Immediately upon its initial discovery by dungeon-delving characters, the strange artifact caused many emotions. At first fear, then hesitancy were displayed. After much hushed discussion, the monolithic stone was approached with trepidation. *What is this? Nothing untoward is happening. Let's examine it closely then.* The markings ringing the face's base were peered at intently, with the aid of *read languages* and *read magic*. That proving fruitless, the adventurers began a systematic investigation of its physical form. All this took considerable time, of course. Denizens of the dark labyrinths of Greyhawk Castle's dungeons came at various intervals to examine the examiners. Despite such interruptions, the team of intrepid explorers managed to find absolutely nothing. Grumbling, they departed for more productive places—monsters to fight, secret doors to discover, and treasure to loot.

Cut to a later adventure in the dungeons, then other, yet further ones. Periodically, whether by design or happenstance, various characters spent considerable time and effort seeking to solve the riddle. From the plateau of the head's crown to the floor surrounding its base, nothing could be found save stone. The eyes were not gems, there were no hidden places within the effigy, yet it radiated several sorts of magic! Something was there surely! There was a hidden meaning and purpose for this artifact, of that all who encountered it were convinced. Yet as time, and monster encounters there in its mighty chamber, passed, no real clue was discovered.

As the DM I was well amused, satisfied. Not so one wily mage. Venturing alone into the dungeon he hotfooted it to the towering face. Once there, he cast several *magic mouth* spells on it. His triggering command was to the effect that when next a person to touch it did X, it was to speak something like this: "Give your most prized magic item freely as a gift to a lesser mage you know and trust. Your great reward will follow in a short time."

Slyly telling no one of this foray, the mage and a fellow spellcaster soon thereafter went again to the chamber of the Great Stone Face, the latter encouraged by the former, of course. What happened might be straight out of a book of practical jokes. As each went about the search for an answer to the mystery, sure enough! Wizard #2 was astonished when at last the mouth spoke. "Did you hear?" he queried his fellow. That one responded to the effect that he had heard only imperfectly, what with being on the opposite side of the head, engrossed in his search. "Hah, well, never mind. Here, take this present I give to you now." Saying that, the thoroughly duped wizard handed over a potent and valuable magic item.

"Well thank you," the mage said. "Is there some reason for your sudden generosity?" Of course his companion demurred. "Let's just say it was done freely, and that I don't expect you to do anything in the way of a return favor. Consider it a gift." Expressing his delight at this, the mage assumed possession of the item. Then, after a bit of additional cursory inspection of the artifact and its environs, wizard #2 suggested they leave, for there seemed to be nothing to be discovered after all. The mage delayed a bit for sake of appearances, then agreed. Off the two went as had all before them.

Time passed, and no great reward was forthcoming. Had the mage been able to suppress his glee, his companion would likely never have discovered the trick. However, after a while, wizard #2 insisted they again visit the chamber of the stone head. Lo and behold, he heard the voice speak again. Of course that sent up a red flag; the message was the same. From there it was easy for the wizard to come to the realization that the sound was engendered by a simple *magic mouth* spell. Likewise, the apprehension that he had been duped came in a flash. What could he do? Being of basically good alignment, grousing, groaning, and accepting hard fate were about the whole of his recourse. After all, he had sought to gain something only for himself in giving the "gift." Naturally the whole episode soon became known to the other players, and there was much mirth and jesting at the wizard's expense.

The moral of this brief tale is a simple one: If the DM places something that seems insoluble in the campaign, if it defies attempts to unravel its mystery for a prolonged period, the players will likely take over and make something else of it.

For those readers wondering about the actual solution to the enigma, maybe when your PC is exploring the dungeons beneath the ruined castle of legend and locates the Great Stone Face, he or she will be successful in discovering the answer. . . .

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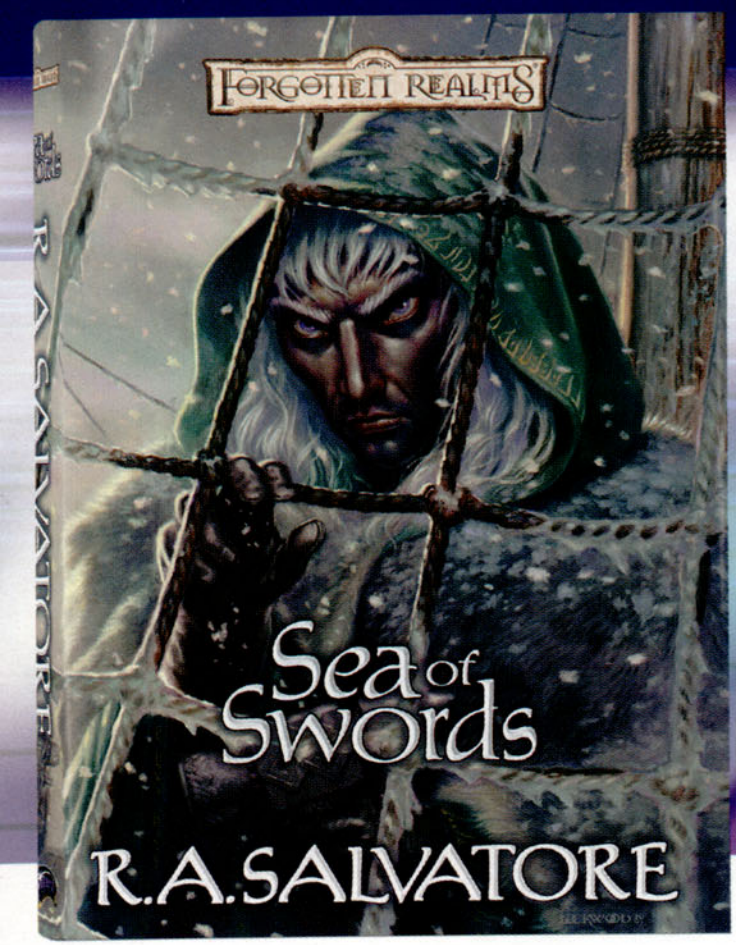

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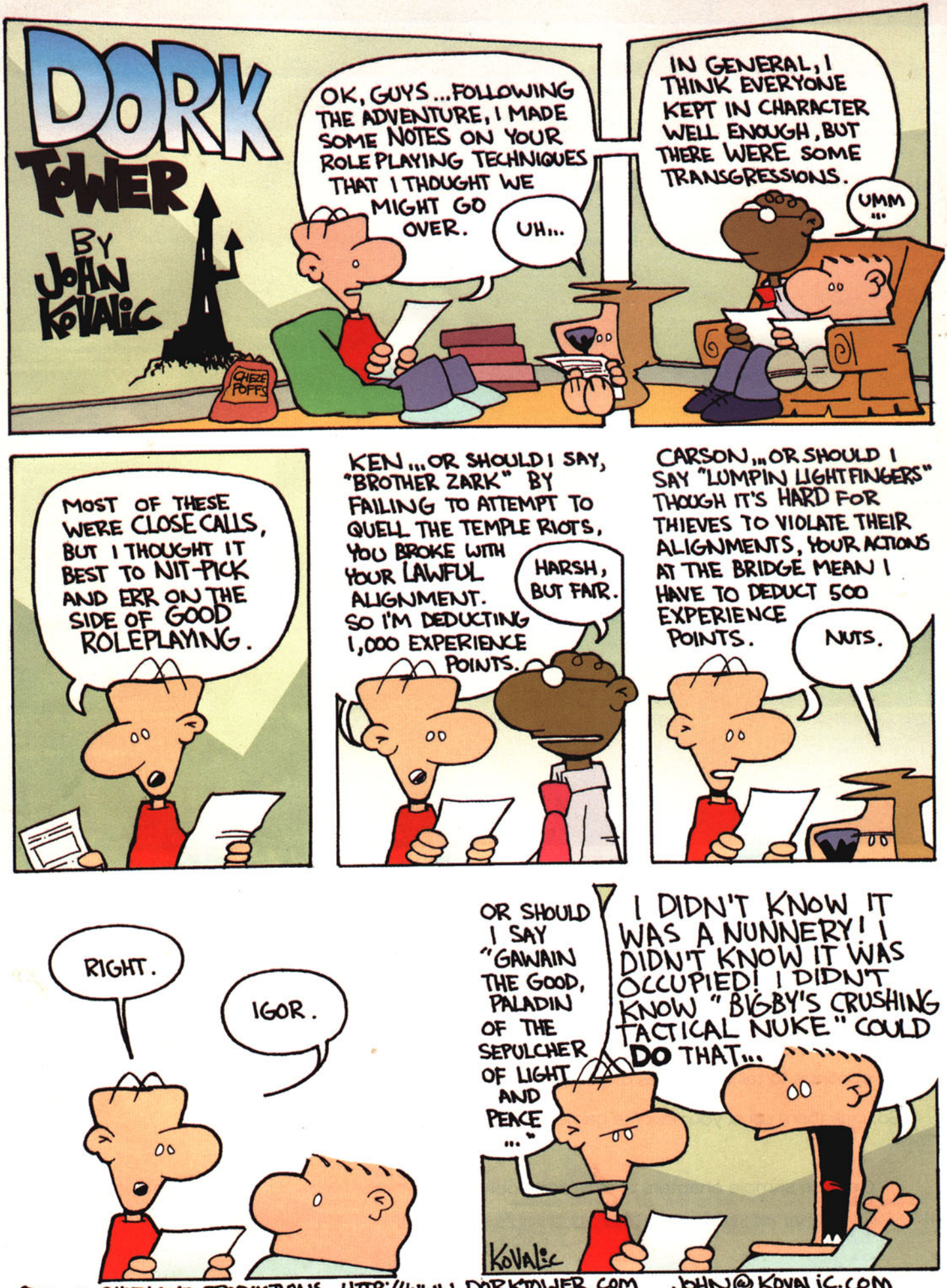
DORK TOWER
BY JOHN KOVALIC
OK, GUYS ... FOLLOWING THE ADVENTURE, I MADE SOME NOTES ON YOUR ROLE PLAYING TECHNIQUES THAT I THOUGHT WE MIGHT GO OVER.
UH...
IN GENERAL, I THINK EVERYONE KEPT IN CHARACTER WELL ENOUGH, BUT THERE WERE SOME TRANSGRESSIONS.
UMM ...
CHEEZE POFFS
MOST OF THESE WERE CLOSE CALLS, BUT I THOUGHT IT BEST TO NIT-PICK AND ERR ON THE SIDE OF GOOD ROLEPLAYING.
KEN ... OR SHOULD I SAY, "BROTHER ZARK" BY FAILING TO ATTEMPT TO QUELL THE TEMPLE RIOTS, YOU BROKE WITH YOUR LAWFUL ALIGNMENT. SO I'M DEDUCTING 1,000 EXPERIENCE POINTS.
HARSH, BUT FAIR.
CARSON ... OR SHOULD I SAY "LUMPIN LIGHTFINGERS" THOUGH IT'S HARD FOR THIEVES TO VIOLATE THEIR ALIGNMENTS, YOUR ACTIONS AT THE BRIDGE MEAN I HAVE TO DEDUCT 500 EXPERIENCE POINTS.
NUTS.
RIGHT.
IGOR.
OR SHOULD I SAY "GAWAIN THE GOOD, PALADIN OF THE SEPULCHER OF LIGHT AND PEACE ... "
I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS A NUNNERY! I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS OCCUPIED! I DIDN'T KNOW "BIGBY'S CRUSHING TACTICAL NUKE" COULD DO THAT...
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LUKAS

FOUR FACES OF DEATH

NEW DEATH GODS FOR YOUR GAME

by Steven A. Townshend • illustrated by Chuck Lukacs

In Western civilization, the physical presence of death is most commonly associated with the image of the grim reaper. Halloween and la Dia de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead) use skeletal icons similar to the grim reaper to capture the morbid part of our imaginations for these frightening festivals. Many campaigns embrace this same image of death. Nerull, Myrkul, and Chemosh, for instance, death gods from GREYHAWK, the FORGOTTEN REALMS, and DRAGONLANCE, all share that same universal skeletal image of death as the grim reaper.

Among the world's mythologies, death assumes many different aspects. Four of these in particular depart from the classical Western concept of death. With a little bit of thought, DMs can vary the death mythology of their campaigns, creating cultures with extremely diverse views on death. Such varying attitudes will give a unique texture to each religion or culture, as well as provide interesting roleplaying opportunities for clerics of those religions.

1 DEATH AS A GUIDE

Indian mythology touches on every aspect of the human experience, shown through the tales of its gods. From its beginnings 3,500 years ago, Indian myth was recorded and preserved. Though it has passed through several transformations, the ancient knowledge of India survives today as Hinduism, one of the world's largest religions.

Between 1500 and 1200 B.C., Indo-Aryan tribes invaded India from the northwest, bringing to the resident Dravidian people advanced literature on the nature of religion, philosophy, science, ethics, and law, called Vedas. The oldest of these texts was called the Rig Veda (1000 B.C.), and it was believed to have been penned by the gods themselves. Between 400 B.C. and 400 A.D. the Sanskrit Mahabharata and Ramayana were developed. The Vedas, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana are the works from which ancient Indian myth and Hinduism developed.

In the Hindu religion, many gods are avatars of one another. For instance, the central Hindu god, Brahma, god of creation and birth, has two avatars: Vishnu, god of preservation, and Shiva, god of destruction. Likewise, Shiva's wife, Shakti, is the goddess of rebirth, but her avatar Kali is a monstrous and terrible goddess of death. Furthermore, an incarnation called Devi is the unified, perfect form of both Shiva and Shakti—death and rebirth.

YAMA

Although Shiva and Kali ultimately represent death in Hinduism, the death guide, Yama, is the one who actually contacts the departed souls and takes them to hell or to paradise. Yama wears red robes and his skin is dark green. Four arms stretch from his body. In one of his hands he holds a noose for catching souls and in another a great mace. Yama rides a huge water buffalo, and he has four four-eyed messengers—a pigeon, an owl, and two bridled watch-dogs that guard the entrance to his domain.

According to legend, Yama was the first man born, and his twin sister Yami the first woman. They were the children of the rising sun, Vivasvat, and his wife Saranyu. As Yama was the first man to die, he was the first to discover the path through the moon to the land of the dead, called "The Path of the Fathers." When Yama discovered the land of the dead, he founded a city there, Yamapua, and proclaimed himself lord of that city.

Yama is strictly neutral in the matters of death. As he was the finder of the path, he sees it as his duty to guide the dead along to the afterlife. Those who do not find the way must remain behind and become ghouls on the surface of the world. Although Yama was once a man, the other gods fear him because they, too, can die. Some sources call Yama the least popular Hindu god, probably because of his association with death.

THE AFTERLIFE

When a person dies, Yama comes to collect his soul. Setting out from Yamapua on his water buffalo, the death god finds the place where the soul is wandering. Yama then acts as a guide to the soul, leading it southwest along the Path of the Fathers through

the moon, to Yamapua. When a body is cremated, Yama works in conjunction with Agni, the fire god. Agni burns the evil out of the soul, and it is left behind as ash. The good parts, the limbs and body of the deceased, arrive unharmed in the Land of the Fathers. At the gates to Yama's domain his two snarling, four-eyed guardian dogs sit. They make sure no souls escape and guard the entrance to Yama's realm.

Yama takes the soul beyond the threshold of the guardian dogs, where he is received by Chitragupta, the registrar of the dead. Chitragupta surveys the soul and notifies Yama of all the soul's deeds in life. Yama then takes on his role as Dharmaraja, the lord of righteousness, and passes his judgment on the soul.

If the soul has been righteous and good in its lifetime, Yama allows it to remain on the moon, in the Land of the Fathers. There, in Yamapua, the soul can enjoy pleasure with any of its friends or ancestors who happen to dwell there. Yama sits beneath a tree and plays the flute beside Varuna, the god called the "prime mover of the universe." They drink soma, the fermented liquor of the soma plant (the nectar of the Hindu gods). Soma is offered to the righteous, and through drinking soma they become immortal. Once the soul has lived out all of the good merits it had in life, it returns to the world, reincarnated into a lesser form to continue its process of spiritual growth.

Yama leads some exceptionally righteous souls along the path to the northwest to the sun, the land of the gods. There, the soul dwells in extreme happiness in paradise with the divine gods. Even in paradise, the souls can outlive their merits after a time and be reincarnated into the world to continue their spiritual development. In Hindu belief, once a soul attains a state of complete selflessness in which the entire world is realized as a false reality or passing shadow, and its attachment to the physical is nullified completely, only then can the soul pass on into a perfect realm where it will no longer be reborn, but rather it will exist eternally in its perfect state.

If a soul has done great evils in its life, however, Yama's judgment can be terrible. Yama has the option to sentence the wicked and the unbelievers to annihilation if their crimes are truly unfathomable. The soul becomes nothing and is cast out of the karmic circle. Annihilation happens only in the most extreme cases. Usually, if one commits evil in one's lifetime, his soul suffers in the afterlife. Yama banishes the soul to the realm of darkness called Put where the hells lie. Nobody has an exact count of how many hells are in Put; some say seven, others twenty-eight, and still others claim that there are hundreds of thousands of hells. The number of hells is insignificant, for the tortures that are inflicted upon the souls fit the crimes they perpetrated in life. Men who are cruel to animals are ripped apart by monsters, yet they remain alive. People who wed out of station are forced to embrace red-hot human forms. Cruel men are boiled in oil. Yama's hells are extremely creative. Eventually, after enduring Yama's hells, a soul is reincarnated into the lowest of forms—a slug, perhaps, or a worm, an insect, or a lizard. It lives out its life and is continually reincarnated into higher and higher forms until it lives as a man again, the highest possible mortal form.

Exodus

Escaping from Yama is no easy task. His four-eyed messengers can see a wide scope of places and things. Chitragupta, the registrar of the dead, keeps a perfect record of one's deeds and actions. The vicious four-eyed watch-dogs can tackle any soul. Yama himself knows where all souls dwell, and atop his giant water buffalo with his innate powers, he can track and find anyone.

The only known way to escape from Yama's hold has been through the compassion of his former human side, accompanied by one's strong will or great heart. A young woman named Savitri married a young lord who died shortly after their marriage. When Yama came for him, Savitri followed Yama along the Path of the Fathers, entreating the death guide to stop and listen. She was so beautiful that Yama offered her any boon save the life of her husband. Yama gave gift after gift to Savitri, the last of these being the gift of many sons. Savitri accepted the gift and then played on Yama's human sensibilities, as he had left her a widow with a large family. In the end, Yama felt sorry for Savitri and returned her husband to her.

Spells like *raise dead* and *resurrection* should work normally in Indian mythology, but raising or resurrecting the dead is, on a cosmic scale, a great disservice to the soul that is brought back. If a cleric is able to bring a soul back to life before it is reincarnated, the karmic journey of the individual is set back a bit, and the soul, although alive, has not moved on toward perfection. *Animate dead* and *speak with dead* also function normally.

The Dead and Undead

The concept of reincarnation is prevalent in Hinduism, so fear of the dead is purposeless. The soul has moved on from the tomb and exists elsewhere. The soul of a dead man that Yama has not claimed, however, is greatly feared, for it walks the earth as a ghoul.

2 Death as a Bureaucracy

Long before the rise of Greece or Rome, China was a great empire, its first dynasty established around 2,000 B.C. Advanced technology and building techniques evolved in China long

Four Faces of Death

DEITY	ALIGNMENT	PORTFOLIO	DOMAINS	FAVORED WEAPON
Ahriman	CE	Death, hate, disease, fear, anger	Chaos, Death, Destruction, Evil	Longsword
Baron Samedi	CN	Death, ancestral knowledge, eroticism, cemeteries	Death, Knowledge, Evil, Protection, Trickery	Cane (club)
Yama	LN	Death, guidance	Death, Animal, Law, Travel	Lasso
Yan-lo	LN	Judgement	Death, Knowledge, Law	Warhammer

before they ever reached the west, accrediting the Chinese with the invention of gunpowder, paper, the clock, and the legacy of the Great Wall of China. Chinese thought produced the ethical philosophy of Confucianism and the harmonious, spiritual way of Taoism. Around 100 A.D., Buddhism came from India and integrated itself into Chinese culture, bringing with it some figures of Indian myth, which blended as easily with Chinese mythology as Buddhism blended with Taoism.

The Chinese social system was so embedded into Chinese mythology that the two concepts are inseparable. The prime Chinese deity is known as the August Personage of Jade. He oversees everything that is done on earth and in heaven, and all the other gods answer to him. Thus, a great celestial bureaucracy of different gods with various offices is created, each in charge of a particular aspect of the world (nature, business, walls and ditches, and so on). The August Personage of Jade directly reflected the real emperor, thus the Chinese myths necessarily gave examples to mortals about how they should live their lives, serving both gods and state at once.

THE YEN-WANG-YEH

The idea of the Yen-wang-yeh comes from Indian myth. Yen-wang-yeh literally means Yama King, in reference to the Hindu god of death. However, as Indian mythology has but one judge, the Chinese have ten. The Yen-wang-yeh dress as emperors, adorned in robes of office and the greatest finery. Each of the Yen-wang-yeh lives in a palace in the town of Feng-tu in hell. There are nine law courts in the town of Feng-tu, and each court is presided over by a different Yen-wang-yeh who judges the dead for their crimes on earth. Those who have led good lives are passed on to Paradise or reincarnated. Those who are evil, the Yen-wang-yeh pass off to one of two hells adjoining each court. The individual names of the Yen-wang-yeh are unimportant, as Chinese gods sometimes leave their positions and others are promoted into them. Yan-Lo, however, is commonly accepted as the Yen-wang-yeh of the first court.

The Yen-wang-yeh are not the only death gods. One of the three Chinese Gods of Happiness, Shou Hsing, the God of Longevity, is responsible for keeping the records that indicate when a person's lifespan has expired. He is depicted with a huge, egg-shaped head, smiling broadly.

THE AFTERLIFE

When Shou Hsing's records indicate one's life has expired, one of the Yen-wang-yeh sends two minions, Niu-t'ou (Ox Head) and Ma-Mien (Horse Face), to the man's house to drag him off to the underworld. At the threshold to the man's house, Ox Head and Horse Face encounter the Men-shen, the Door Gods. Their names are Shen-t'u and Yu-lu, and they guard every door in China. One has a black or red face and the other's is white. They are responsible for making sure an arrest warrant is presented for the resident within, and that the warrant is accurate. If so, they release the man to the two retrievers.

Ox Head and Horse Face then take the soul to the Ch'eng-huang, the particular God of Walls and Ditches of the city or village from whence the soul came. For a period of up to forty-nine days, the soul is questioned by the God of Walls and Ditches. Occasionally, a mistake occurs and the wrong soul is brought forth. In such a case, the soul is allowed to return to its body, which is why the ancient Chinese left their dead unburied for a period between seven and forty-nine days after death.

Finally, the soul is taken through the Gate of Demons, or the Ghost Door (Kuei-men-kuan), which lies between the branches of a huge peach tree atop a high mountain, guarded by the Door Gods. Their destination is the town of Feng-tu, the domain of the Yen-wang-yeh. As they travel over the countryside of hell, they cross the river Nai-ho and K'u-ch'u-ch'iao ("the red river"), which is spanned by the Bridge of Pain. On the way to Feng-tu, they pass Wang-su-ch'eng, the Town of Those Who Died in Accidents.

The soul arrives in the court of the first Yen-wang-yeh for judgment. If the soul is righteous and good, the first Yen-wang-yeh grants one of three rewards. The least of these is to be sent immediately to the tenth Yen-wang-yeh to be reincarnated on earth. A purer soul may be more rewarded with a voyage to K'un-lun Mountain at the center of the earth, the dwelling place of the gods that is ruled by the Queen-Mother Wang, wife of the August Personage of Jade. The immortals live there in eternal happiness, although it is only a temporary respite for mortals, prior to their next reincarnation. The Peach Tree of Immortality grows there; gods have occasionally blessed questing mortals with peaches of immortality as a reward for some heroic service. The greatest reward of all, however, is for a truly whole and unified soul to be sent to the Land of Extreme Felicity in the West. It is a land that is separated from earth by an infinity of other worlds, closed in on all sides, surrounded by seven terraces filled with trees of perfect gems and lakes of lotuses with golden sands. Beautiful birds sing there and showers of blossoms continually fall. The Buddha appears to the best of these souls at death, leads them here, and puts them inside a lotus flower until cleansed of all impurity.

Chinese mythology created a structured system to deal with wicked souls. If the soul had committed evils in its lifetime, the first Yen-wang-yeh passes it on to the Yen-wang-yeh responsible for judging and punishing those evils. Nieh-ching-t'ai, the Mirror of the Wicked, is held up to the soul, and all its unpunished actions from previous lives are revealed. The soul then proceeds to one of the courts of hell for judgment followed by corrective punishment. The court system is arranged as follows:

Court 2: Ignorant doctors
Court 3: Forgers and back-biters
Court 4: Dishonest businessmen and blasphemers
Court 5: Murderers, unbelievers, and the lustful
Court 6: Sacrilege
Court 7: Grave violators and cannibals
Court 8: Those lacking in filial pity
Court 9: Arsonists
(Court 9 is connected to the Town of Those Who Died in Accidents.)

Each punishment fits the crime committed. Greedy men might be forced to ingest molten gold, cannibals might be eaten alive, arsonists burned by fire that consumes them very slowly, and so on. The supremely wicked are sometimes forced to endure all the tortures of hell, and each time their

bodies are torn apart, they are reassembled perfectly to endure the next set of tortures. Minions wearing loincloths, each bearing two lumps on the forehead, are the drones of hell. They carry out the tortures and punishments determined by the Yen-wang-yeh.

In the tenth court, there stands a huge iron wheel many leagues in dimension. Flames shoot from it as demons push souls onto the wheel. After the tortures of hell have been borne according to the crimes, the Lady Meng, who lives in a house by the exit to hell, feeds the soul the Broth of Oblivion so that it forgets everything from its past life. The tenth Yen-wang-yeh then puts the soul onto the Wheel of Life and Death, or the Wheel of Transmigration, and hurls the soul down to earth and into its next life. Those who are to be reborn as animals, however, are thrown off the Bridge of Pain into the river of red water where they are taken back into the world.

The Town of Those Who Died in Accidents is ruled by the ninth Yen-wang-yeh. It is inhabited by the souls who passed away before their registered time had expired. They must live as starving demons (also called "hungry ghosts") until, three years after entering hell, they are allowed to haunt the place of the accident where they died and try to trick someone else into dying the same way, thus exchanging places with that person. Needless to say, mortals avoid the sites of accidents precisely for that reason.

Exodus

The Chinese afterlife has perhaps more escape possibilities than any other. It is said that if a man is generous to Shou Hsing, the God of Longevity, the god will act favorably towards him and prolong his life. The Ghost Door is guarded by the Door Gods, but souls can attempt to pass through it.

Unfortunately, if a soul is caught trying to escape, the Door Gods throw it to tigers that devour it. A man who finds a way to alter the paperwork of the gods might also escape death, providing a "wrongful" arrest warrant for Ox Head and Horse Face. Some mortals attain a peach of immortality from the gods on K'un-lun Mountain. Others have been known to endure the courts and tortures of hell and sneak by Lady Meng, avoiding the Broth of Oblivion so that they are reborn into life with all of their previous memories intact.

Raise dead, resurrection, and *animate dead* should work normally for clerics of the gods of ancient China. *Speak with dead,* however, puts the cleric in contact with the local God of Walls and Ditches. The cleric must indicate with whom she wishes to speak and why. If her query is accepted, the cleric is passed up to either a god of heaven (like Shou Hsing) or a god of hell (the Yen-wang-yeh), who pass their judgment on the request. If that request is accepted, the gods locate the soul and notify it of the request made by the cleric. At this point, it is at the soul's discretion what it wishes to answer.

The Dead and Undead

It is conceivable that the ancient Chinese did not fear the dead, but rather they hoped their loved ones would return from the God of Walls and Ditches within 49 days. If not, the body would be buried and the soul would one day return to the world. It was the souls of those who died before their time that were feared, for they roamed the site of their death as "hungry ghosts," or "starving demons," trying to trick someone into befalling the same fate they had suffered and thus exchanging places with that person in the Town of Those Who Died in Accidents.

3 Death as the Ultimate Evil

The Persians were one of the original Indo-Aryan tribes that invaded the area of present day Iran around 1400 B.C. For a time, they were great conquerors, taking the whole of Egypt, Babylon, Thrace, and Macedonia, and sacking Athens before they themselves were conquered by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. They are remembered for their great leaders, Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes, and for their conflict with Greece in the Greco-Persian wars, in which the famous battle of Marathon was fought. Under King Darius, the Persians introduced the first successful use of coinage to the world.

The Persians made a major religious impact on the world through their prophet Zarathustra, or Zoroaster (628-551 B.C.), who adapted the traditional mythology of the area into a dualist theology where there existed two opposing forces of good and evil. Zoroastrianism was among the very first monotheistic religions, designating one supreme god who created the world but was eternally embattled with a spirit of evil over whom he would one day triumph. The god, the Good Mind, or Good Spirit, was called Ahura Mazda, or Ohrmazd, and represented everything that was good and life-sustaining in the world, while the Evil Mind, or Evil Spirit, was called Ahriman, or Angra Mainyu, and represented everything that was evil and life-negating. Persian myths and the teachings of Zoroaster, specifically the idea of opposing good and evil forces and the existence of angelic beings, contributed in a large part to the later beliefs of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Ahriman

In one legend, Ahriman was created by Ahura Mazda by a random thought. When Ahriman appeared, Ahura Mazda offered him friendship, but Ahriman distrusted him and spurned his offer. Thus a war began between the two that was to last for all time. No sooner had Ahura Mazda created the world than Ahirman began to implement destruction upon it. Death, disease, hatred, and wickedness are his tools for sabotaging the work of the benevolent god, although anything harmful to mankind is Ahriman's work as well. Ahriman is an intangible evil, sinister in intelligence and great in power. Since the world is a creation of Ahura Mazda, and therefore good, the Evil Spirit cannot coexist with good in its physical form. He can only possess the bodies of mortal creatures like a parasite. He resides in the place called "Worst Thought," the dwelling place of wickedness in the north where he is the prince of the demonic hordes, or "drujes."

The Afterlife

Ahriman causes the death of men in the world. Some he kills with age, some with murder or disease. Every death in the world is caused by Ahriman, although painful death and tragic death please him the most. It stands to reason that since Ahura Mazda reigns over heaven, Ahriman is the creator and overseer of hell.

When a person dies, the spirit of the deceased hovers near the body for a period of three nights in silent contemplation and regret for its departed life. Ahriman's drujes draw near the recently departed and lash out at the soul, hungry to punish it, whether it is deserving of punishment or not. The just Spirit of Obedience, Sraosha (a Zoroastrian "angel"), comes quickly to move the soul along to its judgment.

During the course of a person's life, his good and evil deeds accumulate in a place called the House of Song. Sraosha guides the soul there, and in the company of Sraosha and two other good spirits, Rashnu and Mithra, the soul's deeds are weighed on a balance. If a man's good deeds outweigh his evil ones, he is judged worthy of heavenly salvation. If his evil deeds outnumber his good ones, he is sentenced to hell. If the deeds weigh equally, he is taken to Hamestagan, a gray, misty place in-between worlds that continually undergoes slight temperature shifts from hot to cold. Very little else happens in Hamestagan.

After judgment has been passed, the good soul is met outside the House of Song by an incredibly beautiful woman, borne on a wind of sweet perfume. She is Conscience, the manifest totality of the soul's thoughts, words, and deeds. "Follow," she bids the good soul.

Conscience leads the good soul over the River of Mourners' Tears to Mount Alburz, a mountain that has grown to the sky over a period of eight hundred years. Ahriman had a hand in corrupting the mountain so on its rim it bears the Arezur Ridge, the gateway to hell that the demons use. Atop Mount Alburz, the Chinvat Bridge spans the distance between earth and heaven. Conscience takes the good soul across the broad bridge where it is met by a purifying fire on its entrance to heaven. A soul whose evil deeds equal his good ones would not be purified by the fire, but be taken immediately to Hamestagan at this point.

The good soul passes into one of three paradises. The least of these is called the Moon Station, and it is a paradise for those who led good, albeit imperfect, lives. The second station is the Sun Station, where good, wise, and just rulers reside. The last station is the Good Mind. There, the truly good, virtuous, and faithful dwell in the presence of Ahura Mazda, enjoying bliss among rich and comfortable accommodations, fine carpets, and plush cushions.

Ahriman is not to be outdone, however. The wicked soul who leaves the House of Song is met by the manifestation of his evil Conscience, a naked, wretched, diseased hag. The hag drags the soul across the River of Mourners' Tears and to the top of Mount Alburz to the Chinvat Bridge. The Chinvat Bridge appears very narrow to the wicked soul, and a reluctance to attempt crossing the bridge might overcome him. If such is the case, all the evil within the soul withdraws from the body to form a wild, bestial creature that forces the soul onto the bridge. After the soul has taken three steps—the steps of evil thoughts, words, and deeds—the bridge suddenly turns so that the side facing upwards is as thin and sharp as a sword. The wicked soul is dumped into hell over the Arezur Ridge, the gateway to Ahriman's domain.

Ahriman's hell is truly a place of the most dreadful imagination and horror, the ultimate concept of the Evil Mind. The soul that passes into hell undergoes intense waves of cold and heat, blanketed by a darkness so intense it must literally be cut with a knife to pass through it. The souls of hell are packed together in waves tighter than anyone could imagine was possible. There is no room to breathe beyond what is barely necessary to maintain survival. Nevertheless, every one of those souls in hell believes themselves to be completely and utterly alone. Time passes so slowly that a period of three days transpires as though it were nine thousand years, the entire lifespan of the world in Zoroastrian mythology. To make matters worse, drujes and other creatures as tall as mountains preside over hell. They lurk over the endless miles of damned souls, seizing them by the handful and tearing them limb from

DEATH & REINCARNATION

In the Hindu, Persian, and ancient Chinese beliefs, reincarnation is a major precept of the faith. Game mythologies based on elements of these faiths might deal with spells like *animate dead, create greater undead, create undead, raise dead, reincarnate, resurrection, true resurrection,* and *speak with dead* in very different ways from the average D&D campaign:

REINCARNATION IS IMMEDIATE AND FINAL. When a creature dies, it is immediately reincarnated. None of the spells mentioned above function. Any undead that exist are creatures that were cursed by the gods for some transgression.

REINCARNATION TAKES TIME. There is a limited amount of time that a soul can be called back to the living or be used to create undead. All the spells mentioned above function normally so long as the soul involved has not been reincarnated already.

REINCARNATION LEAVES DEATH'S DOOR OPEN. Reincarnation is immediate or takes time but when *raise dead, reincarnate, resurrection, true resurrection,* or *speak with dead* is cast, the reincarnated creature or soul is contacted and given the choice of whether or not to respond or return from death. Reincarnated creatures have no knowledge of their former lives and will generally fear such contact and refuse to cooperate with the spells' casters.

Animate dead, create undead, and *create greater undead* can force a soul or reincarnated creature's former body to rise as an undead. Souls waiting to be reincarnated must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 + spell level + the spell caster's bonus for the relevant ability) or be drawn back to the world as an undead creature appropriate to the spell. Reincarnated creatures must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + spell level + the spell caster's bonus for the relevant ability) or be killed and brought back to the world as an undead creature made from it's previous life's body.

This death mythology offers many unique situations. A character might need to learn the location of his former body's remains to prevent them from being used as a means to end his present life. Owning the remains of someone who is now reincarnated gives you an interesting way to communicate with them. Those who cast such spells, even beneficial spells like *resurrection,* might be hated and reviled as evil warlocks that murder the living for their own purposes.

REINCARNATION IS HEAVEN'S LAW. The spells mentioned above function normally, but casting them attracts the attention of celestials or devils. These creatures will seek to punish both the spellcaster and the subjects of the spell as transgressors of the laws of heaven.

REINCARNATION REQUIRES ONLY PART OF A CREATURES ESSENCE. The spells mentioned above function normally because reincarnation requires only part of a creature's essence. The rest of the soul resides in heaven, a great cycle of life force, or some other religious concept. This is why characters that are raised from the dead loose a level: That part of their life force was used to be reincarnated.

REINCARNATION IS EXCLUSIVE. Reincarnation takes time or is immediate as described above, but creatures who choose to return to life or are forced into undeath are permanently removed from the cycle of reincarnation and rebirth. Upon death or destruction, their souls are damned to walk the world as ghosts, cast into an endless void, utterly destroyed, or suffer some other similarly terrible fate.

limb in weather conditions that consist of searing fire, driving snow, falling stones, and ashes. In addition to this, each soul eventually gets corrective punishment befitting of its crimes.

Exodus

For the recently departed, there is little chance of escaping the immediate dangers present upon first waking as an incorporeal spirit. Druj Nasu, the corpse demon, and a host of others gather quickly around one who has recently passed. With luck, the just Sraosa will arrive quickly to rescue a soul for judgment before the drujes have their hand at torture. An incorporeal form would be hard pressed to find a place to escape to under these conditions. The River of Mourners' Tears offers no solace, and the Chinvat Bridge is guarded by both the good spirits leading the righteous to heaven and the drujes lurking near the Arezur Ridge. Fortunately for wicked souls, however, the Zoroastrian religion did not agree with the concept of eternal suffering, especially if a soul had paid for its wicked deeds in hell. After serving its time, a formerly wicked soul is passed back into the world for another chance at life.

A good cleric in the favor of Ahura Mazda can *raise* or *resurrect* the dead. A cleric using Ahriman's power cannot, although he can *create undead,* while Ahura Mazda's clerics cannot. *Speak with dead* might be beneficial to the cleric who contacts a soul in the Moon or Sun stations, or in the presence of Ahura Mazda. The soul will patiently provide quiet wisdom to the cleric. A soul that happens to be in hell, however, is dangerous to contact. The hell-bound soul screams the answers to the cleric's questions as it undergoes its torment, begging for mercy. More than one cleric has been driven to madness by contacting a soul in the wrong place.

The Dead and Undead

The ancient Persians had a great dread of corpses—not because of what they might do, but because of what they carried. All death was the work of Ahriman, and therefore evil. It was believed that Druj Nasu, the corpse demon, was present around all corpses, and that his companion drujes tortured the departed soul. At one point in history, corpses were taken to high tower-tombs, where vultures (creatures believed to be wholly infected by Ahriman and death) feasted upon them. Most corpses were cremated so that the people would be rid of the evil that infected them.

4 Death as the Joker

Voudun, or Voodoo, is one of the world's oldest surviving religions. It began approximately seven thousand years ago in Africa as a tribal religion based on communication with the spirit world. In the early 1500s, the slave trade forced thousands of Africans from their homeland and bound them to hard labor in the West Indies. They carried with them their spiritual religion, and as time passed in the company of the Catholic Spanish, the two religions began to grow together.

Both the Voodoo religion and Catholicism revere an ultimate supreme being (called Bondye in Voodoo) who is surrounded by many lesser holy beings in the spirit world. In Catholicism, these beings are called saints. In Voodoo, they are loa.

A loa is typically the spirit of a prominent ancestor or family member that helps the living in one way or another. There are central loa, however, that are known by all practitioners of the Voodoo faith. Some of these include Legba, the guardian of the spiritual crossroads, Agwe, the lord of the seas, and Ghede, the loa of death and resurrection. During Voodoo ceremonies, loa "mount" certain people present and speak through them. At this time, the person "becomes" that loa. Most loa are helpful and friendly. They are known as Rada. There are evil loa, however, who specialize in black magic. They are known as Petro.

Voodoo priests are called houngan, and priestesses are called mambo. They make animal sacrifices of goats or chickens to provide life force for the loa, form protective spells against harm, and heal the sick or injured. They contact the spirit world by attracting the attention of the loa Legba at the crossroads to the two worlds. There is another kind of Voodoo priest, the bokor, who practice black magic and dark sorcery. They are known infamously for their methods of zombie creation.

Baron Samedi

Baron Samedi, also known as Papa Ghede, is the Voodoo loa of death, cemeteries, ancestral knowledge, and eroticism. He appears as a tall, well-dressed man in a long black tailcoat wearing a tall silk top hat and dark, round glasses with one of the lenses popped out, through which he sees the spirit world. He speaks through his nose, carries a cane, and smokes long cigarettes, usually two at once. Baron Samedi guards the crossroads to the spirit world. There, he sits on a cemetery cross (his symbol) by Legba, the loa of life, who appears as a kindly old man with a crutch. Baron Samedi interviews the dead who pass into the spirit world, and thus he is the wisest of the loa, for he learns all the knowledge of those who have died. He controls the dead who have perished by evil magic, so he always has a legion of the undead potentially at his command.

Controlling legions of undead, however, is not Baron Samedi's style. More than anything, he loves to clown at parties and dance. He drinks rum in which twenty-one hot peppers have been steeped. One of the most powerful loa, he enjoys mounting people (whether he is called by them or not) and dancing erotic dances, telling wild jokes, and speaking very liberally in an extremely bawdy fashion. One of his greatest pleasures is mounting people with strong conservative values and causing them to speak as liberally and act as bawdily as he. Afterwards, they remember nothing of their words or actions. Baron Samedi and the other Ghede loa are amused by the importance that humans put on mating and courting rituals and the embarrassment people always seem to suffer in regards to them; Baron Samedi seeks to expose the processes of life (however bawdy) in the presence of death. Baron Samedi and the Ghede family act as liberally as they do because they are already dead, and thus they have no use for awkward social conventions.

Baron Samedi is married to Maman Brigitte, the female loa of the dead, who speaks and acts as wantonly as her husband. She dances the bawdy

banda dance as Baron does, and mounts young girls, driving them to wild behavior.

The couple acts as the protectors of children. Baron Samedi believes that children are too young to die, so he and Maman Brigitte watch over them. It is Baron Samedi's duty to answer healing prayers for those who are near death due to dark magic. Some say that Baron is the loa contact for practitioners of this dark magic as well. When requesting assistance of Baron Samedi, however, it is important to use a false limb to shake hands, or perhaps a cow's foot, for when Baron Samedi departs, he takes with him what he has hold of—better a false limb than one's own arm!

Baron Samedi's wild and liberal behavior is never used viciously, however, or to insult someone. Baron always retains the utmost peak of good humor.

THE AFTERLIFE

When a soul passes from a body, it comes to the crossroads where Baron Samedi and Legba sit with cane and crutch. Baron asks the soul about its life and all it has learned. It is likely that Baron jokes with the soul, perhaps offering it some of his peppered rum and bread. If the soul perished by dark magic, Baron takes it under his control. Otherwise, after the interview, Baron sends the soul off into the mystic waters where spirits dwell. Memories of its past life fade away and it floats with the other spirits. After a time, Baron and Maman Brigitte might decide to pull souls from those waters, transforming them into Ghede loa, and naming them.

One belief of the Voodoo religion is that a person has two inner spiritual forces within her body, the ti-bon-ange and the gwo-bon-ange. The ti-bon-ange is the broad, universal soul the person possesses. In Western thought, it is similar to the conscience. The gwo-bon-ange is a person's specific, personal soul, much as Westerners understand souls to be. A deceased person's soul can be "rescued" by its family by apprehending a govi, a small bottle made for saving ancestors from the mystic waters, and making a large animal sacrifice a year and a day after the deceased has passed on. Baron Samedi sees the soul from the mystical waters and the ancestor's gwo-bon-ange becomes one of the family loa particular to its own clan. The mystical waters where the spirits float without memory is the afterlife of the ancestors who do not become loa—unless the family is one day able to rescue them from that state or Baron Samedi decides to make them Ghede loa.

Sometimes, a person does not die but lives in a deathlike state for the rest of her existence. Such a person has imbibed a poisonous concoction made by a bokor, and becomes a living zombie. The Catholic belief in the devil intersects Voodoo tradition in the second way to create zombies: making a deal with the devil. In this case, the person who wishes for the zombie usually offers the soul of a friend or relative to the devil in exchange for the zombie. Finally, in the most traditional method, the bokor contacts Baron Samedi and gains control of the soul of a recently deceased person, who then becomes the bokor's zombie.

EXODUS

Death in the Voodoo religion offers very little possibility of return to the world, at least not in such a state as one remembers it. Being brought to life as a zombie without self-will under the control of a bokor or Baron Samedi is not at all desirable. The most viable option is to return as a rescued soul, thus becoming a loa, or being saved by Baron Samedi and then becoming a Ghede, free to manifest oneself in others on the mortal world.

Nevertheless, the trickster Baron Samedi is a powerful ally to have, especially if one has been marked for death. It is said that "a man cannot die if Baron refuses to dig his grave." Likewise, Baron Samedi allows his houngan/mambo to *raise* or *resurrect* the dead, although souls that have passed into the spirit world or become Ghede loa might return to the land of the living with chaotic tendencies and a newfound indifference for social conventions. A Ghede loa will likely prefer to dress in the manner of Baron Samedi. If a houngan/mambo attains permission from Legba and Baron Samedi at the crossroads, a spirit or loa may be contacted via *speak with dead*. The spirit or loa will mount someone present (not necessarily the houngan/mambo) and speak through that person. Bokor, using the Petro side of Voodoo, might *animate dead* normally, with the permission of Baron Samedi.

THE DEAD AND UNDEAD

In Voodoo, the dead continue their existence as spirits that have become or might become loa. Cemeteries and tombs, therefore, are not seen as frightening or something to be dreaded—unless there's a bokor at work there, animating endless armies of zombies . . .

CREATING DEATH MYTHOLOGIES

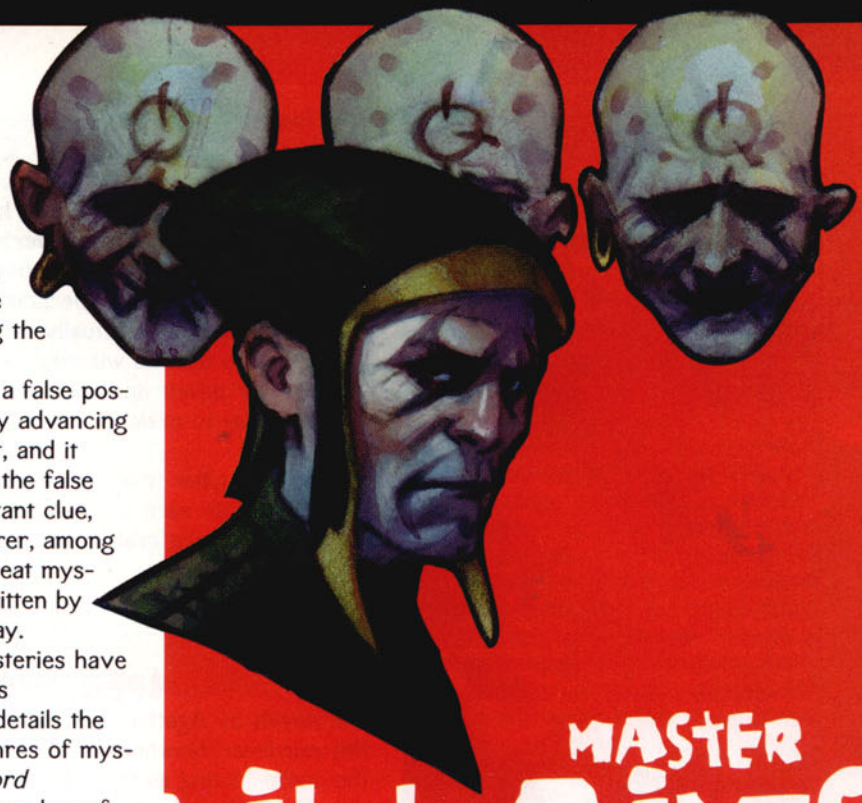
ALL OF THE PRECEDING DEATH GODS come from traditions foreign to the Western outlook on death. Fantasy worlds are places of rare and unique wonder, and part of the delight of playing D&D comes with the excitement of exploring a world outside of what we know as "normal." Taking seeds from the mythologies above and mixing them together or with your own ideas is a good way to create a death mythology for your own campaign. The Indian concept of Death riding a beast, the Chinese Town of Those Who Died in Accidents, the Persian Conscience, and the Voodoo govi bottle might, for example, be combined to create a death mythology where Death rides, say, a great red rooster that perches on one's eaves and crows at the hour of one's death. The departed are taken by the beautiful Conscience to a hell where, one year after death, if their relatives haven't performed a sacred burial rite with the bottled ashes of the dead, spirits might return to the places where they perished and possess the bodies of the living to enact the will of the dead.

THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING of what could become a campaign culture's death mythology. You should justify why people believe the things they do, and define each culture's particular attitude toward death. Using these ideas, DMs can create strange, interesting, and powerful interpretations of life's final encounter that will influence the campaign world and the characters that live in it.

DESIGNING MYSTERY ADVENTURES

by Bryan Fagan • illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

PLOTS & SCHEMES



MASTER VILLAINS

10 Evil Archetypes

by Brian Corvello • illustrated by D. Alexander Gregory

Too many villains have the same sort of evil plans that the thousand villains before them had: world conquest, lust for power, greed for wealth, or simple vengeance. It's hard for them not to. The D&D game simply can't do without villains. After all, something must challenge the heroes. But if you're tired of the same old plots, here are a few tricks to make your next villain more unique.

Mystery writers tell some of the most intriguing stories in existence, and they have a lot to teach DMs. The goals of mystery writers and DMs are often similar. Each must keep those who closely follow the story off-balance to create an unexpected yet satisfying end. Additionally, the writer and DM must be inventive while preserving the integrity of the story.

The writer must hold the readers' attention with a false possibility, character, or plot point while simultaneously advancing the real solution in a subtle manner. This is difficult, and it leads to reliance on tried-and-true building blocks: the false trail, the double bluff, downplaying the most important clue, and revealing the least likely suspect as the murderer, among others. All of these date back to one of the first great mystery stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," written by Edgar Allan Poe in 1841, and they are still used today.

DMs and players looking for information on mysteries have several options. One of the best is Bruce Murphy's *The Encyclopedia of Murder and Mystery*, which details the important authors, historical development, and genres of mystery stories. Another excellent source is *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*, and a number of other references are listed in that book's bibliography.

Mystery writers and DMs must find new, effective ways to misdirect the readers' attention from the truth and onto false solutions—in other words, telling one story while appearing to tell another. Fortunately, DMs have it a little easier. Since players are likely to be in a fantasy mindset, sprinkling the campaign with less-often used mystery tricks has an excellent chance of catching players off guard. Additionally, because of the differences in genre, the tricks don't have to be as original as they must in a mystery story.

Warning: To illustrate the concepts outlined below, the "tricks" of several famous mystery novels are revealed. Proceed with caution.

Logic Games

When the human mind detects a pattern in seemingly random events or objects, it naturally fills in the blanks to complete the pattern. In *The ABC Murders* by Agatha Christie, a man calling himself "ABC" murders Mrs. Ascher in Andover, Ms. Barnard in Bexhill-on-Sea, and Sir Carmichael Clarke in Churston. After the man sitting next to Mr. Downes in Doncaster is killed, the obvious conclusion is that the murderer missed his intended target. In actuality, the murderer is Clarke's younger brother, who tried to continue the pattern so Clarke's death seemed merely a part of the serial killer's plan.

Similarly, in *The Thin Man* by Dashiell Hammett, a missing scientist is suspected of several murders. Beneath his lab is discovered a skeleton in oversized male clothing with a monogrammed belt buckle and part of a cane with a rubber tip, leading police to believe the dead man is a fat, lame man with the initials D.W.Q. However, the body is that of the thin scientist, and the murderer is his attorney, who has been misleading police with false sightings.

You might apply these tricks to your D&D game with plots like these:

The following villain archetypes work for anything from a human thief to a pit fiend. It's the motivation that matters, not the power of the villain.

1. The Collector

Everyone needs a hobby, but some hobbies lead to obsession. This villain likes to collect things, the more the better. He won't let trifles like the law stand in the way of his acquisitions.

The villain is a mid-level thief obsessed with daggers and knives. Not only does he rob weaponsmiths and armories, but he breaks into the homes of those who are known to have exquisite weapons, magic or mundane. He thinks nothing of robbing a noble's stronghold and would risk it all to obtain the dagger of a famous person, perhaps even a player character.

The villain is a mind flayer who owns a menagerie of exotic and deadly monsters, all under psionic control. Not only does the mind flayer's hobby leave it with powerful guardians, but some of its carnivorous creatures favor the taste of human—and elven, gnome, dwarven, and halfling—flesh.

The villain is a lich who collects paladins, trapping each inside a crystal sphere through which the undead creature can channel the victim's holy energies.

MYSTERY CHECKLIST

PUZZLE

Usually, the puzzle will take the form of a crime. Almost any crime will work, although it might be easier to get players interested in crimes against people (murder, assault) or their property (theft, vandalism). More abstract crimes, such as treason, can work, especially if one of the PCs or a close associate is involved ("Sharper than a Serpent's Tooth"). Occasionally, there will be no crime or the crimes will be of secondary importance to some other concern ("McGuffin").

SUSPECTS

Individuals are suspects if they have the means, motive, or opportunity to commit the crime. Suspects can either be obvious (some examples of "Logic Games") or they can be discovered during the investigation, perhaps even the person who appears above suspicion ("Beware of Greeks"). The number of suspects can be highly variable, ranging from a large group or a single suspect ("Sharper than a Serpent's Tooth"). In some cases, the suspect will have already been proven as the criminal ("Why, Not Who"). In mysteries without crimes, there might not be a suspect.

MOTIVE

The reason someone commits a crime can range from simple animal emotion to highly logical detailed conspiracies that seem to have little to do with the act. Sometimes the culprit's motive is the sole reason to investigate the crime ("Why, Not Who"). Motives are usually the first step in connecting a criminal to a crime, but sometimes they are hidden ("Beware of Greeks"). In mysteries without crimes, the motive is the reason to solve the puzzle ("McGuffins").

CLUES

Depending on the mystery, clues can be sparse ("When You Have Excluded the Impossible," "Show and Tell") or plentiful. The clues should connect a suspect with the means, motive, and opportunity to commit the crime. The difficulty of discovering the clues can vary, but making them too easy or hard to find can bore or frustrate players. Clues can be hidden in plain sight if

The mayor has been murdered, and a reliable witness saw a woman in robes with a staff, many pouches, and a book under her arm fleeing from the mayor's house. The murder was a botched robbery, and the robber, disguised as a wizard, was actually a rogue trying to use the wizards' reputation for power and quick tempers as a way to mislead authorities.

A serial killer is preying on half-elves, with each murder accompanied by racist graffiti and taunts. The real killer, a half-elf himself, was the spurned lover of the first victim and is using the random and racist nature of the murders to avoid suspicion.

While the PCs visit a small town, villagers accuse a cleric of Hextor, who rules with an iron fist, of several brutal murders. Actually, the cleric has committed no murders but allows the rumors to continue because he can use the fear and awe they create to intimidate any opposition.

SHARPER THAN A SERPENT'S TOOTH

The novels by Agatha Christie are especially devious: anyone can turn out to be the murderer. Nowhere is that more true than in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd;* the doctor acting as the aide to Hercule Poirot is the actual murderer. Even though Dr. Sheppard is the narrator, Christie sidesteps admitting his guilt to readers by omitting the details of his crimes and his motivations for guiding Poirot's investigation. Similarly, a trusted follower or other NPC might betray a PC while pretending to aid him, telling the PCs only pieces of his story.

This device can be used only once or twice before players start complaining about untrustworthiness and unoriginality, and it's not immensely consoling to the PCs if the betrayals occur because of possession, compulsions, or lycanthropy. However, this trick can be used effectively to lead PCs down the wrong track, throwing suspicion on an innocent aide.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre by B. Traven is a better way of approaching the issue: When three prospectors earn a fortune in gold dust in the desolate Mexican wilderness, one of them plots against his partners. He doesn't do it out of greed, however. Instead, he strikes because he is overwhelmingly paranoid that the other two will gang up against him first. It is not unreasonable that an NPC, either a cohort or follower, could become overly protective or possessive of the first large reward they receive and turn on the PCs, especially if it appears the PCs can easily rob him.

An NPC companion, a rogue, has been disappearing every night a large heist takes place, but when the PCs follow him, he disappears soon after entering his favorite bar. Unknown to the PCs, a sorcerer with a grudge against the NPC has been casting *sleep* and then *teleporting* the NPC across town before committing the crimes; the NPC has been too worried about what happens during his blackouts to tell the PCs what he knows.

Someone has sold the army's secrets to the enemy, so the commander has enlisted a wizard to *scry* on the top suspects. The divination reveals that an NPC cohort is stealing the secrets because the real culprit, a bard who makes a living as an information broker, has cast *false scrying* to cover his informant's tracks.

An ally discovers an *arcane mark* upon the forehead of a PC identical to a mark belonging to a cult with telepathic powers. A spiteful rival, who is unconnected with the cult, cast the *arcane mark* upon the PC to create suspicion; the PC has no telepathic powers.

Fictional Underpinnings

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the scene is set for a murder: a lonely, desolate moor; the body of Sir Charles Baskerville, whose body shows no trace of injury but whose face is contorted with fear; the footprints of a gigantic hound, much too large for any native dogs, near to the body; and the conviction that a deadly curse hangs over the heirs of the Baskerville family.

By detailing a spooky setting and giving circumstantial evidence for a family curse, it seems a gigantic hound is prowling the moors, waiting for the Baskervilles' last heir. In actuality, the Baskerville heirs were not subject to a curse but were stalked by a distant heir with a large dog who is looking for an inheritance. The PCs should be even more sympathetic to stories of supernatural woe.

Mystery writers can use anything the readers take for granted and twist it. In James Ellroy's L.A. Quartet (*The Black Dahlia, The Big Nowhere, L.A. Confidential*, and *White Jazz*), the sunny and optimistic outlook of 1950s Los Angeles and the sterling reputation of its police force—propagated by countless movies and TV shows—is shattered by a cast of police officers and criminals that are all brutal and corrupt to some degree. The surprise doesn't have to be as violent or extreme as Ellroy makes it, but PCs need to be reminded that legendary reputations are often that: legends.

Not all heroes can live up to their reputation all the time; occasionally, a kingdom's celebrated justice can sometimes miscarry. Reminding players of these failings can help add an element of uncertainty when using the principles listed in the section above.

The PCs are in need of magical help and search for a group of wizards whose might is told in tales and histories. Unfortunately for them, the wizards built their reputation by being lucky, not skilled.

Combined with a quest for a magical McGuffin (see below) such as a *wand of fireball*, the PCs discover the wizards in the previous example were only low-level magic users with the money to hire others to do their work for them. They don't have access to many magic items.

The townspeople have heard moans, noises, and seen a floating shape in the night. Telling the PCs tales of curses, dark deeds, and magic, the townsfolk blame a ghost. The real culprit is a devious, but very much alive, illusionist.

2. The Dying Villain

Revenge can be sweet when you have nothing to lose. This villain is dying from a powerful curse or magical disease. After seeking out healer after healer to no avail, he has finally accepted that he is going to die. Bitter and angry, the villain is determined to take his enemies to the grave with him. He'll throw caution to the wind in his pursuit for revenge. After all, why worry about safety when you know you are going to die?

The villain decides to unearth a powerful, but highly unstable artifact that he found years ago. Knowing at the time that the dangerous item was beyond his capabilities to wield, he stashed it away. Now, after years of gaining precious experience, he decides to retrieve it to aid in his revenge. Without some careful planning, this artifact might make the villain too powerful for the PCs to stop.

The villain's disease was caused by a failed magical experiment he undertook. Insane with fury, he decides to dump the contaminated remains of the experiment into a nearby town's water supply, insistent that if he must suffer, all must suffer. Fortunately, the villain's former henchman, terrified of contracting the fatal disease himself, has escaped to warn the town. They, in turn, seek out brave adventurers willing to help foil the villain's plan before it's too late.

The villain uses an unholy ritual to summon a powerful fiend from Baator, promising his soul to the devil in return for its aid in destroying the PCs, knowing all the while that he will soon be in Baator anyway. The PCs must defeat the fiend or convince the creature that it is being tricked.

3. The Lover

Sometimes love hurts, especially when a villain falls for one of the player characters. From *potions of love* to the belief that a character is a reincarnation of a long-lost lover, villains can set their black hearts on your heroes for any number of reasons. Whatever the case, this villain is determined to win the character's love, and she doesn't care what she must do to have it.

The villain decides to express her love by secretly "protecting" the player character, eliminating all potential enemies. Unfortunately, the villain has no sense of scale. If the PC's superior reprimands him, the character might find his boss's corpse on his doorstep the next morning.

The villain is a spellcaster who decides the best way to win over the object of her affections is through spells and magic items.

The villain is of another species and plans to transform the character into one of its kind.

they don't appear to have any bearing ("Fictional Underpinnings"). What appear to be clues are sometimes false leads (see below). Clues lead the PCs to the solution of the puzzle in mysteries without a crime.

False Leads

Mysteries usually don't run in straight lines, and false leads are a tool to send the PCs in different directions. The false leads might be explicit ("Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth") or merely understood ("Fictional Underpinnings"). Players will often voice their own early suspicions, and playing to these suppositions can tie them into knots. Since it is difficult to tell which false leads and clues players will seize upon, this would involve creating the false leads on the fly. The crime itself can create false leads ("Logic Games").

Solution

There should be a solution to the puzzle as a payoff for the PCs' hard work. The solution can serve as a purely psychological reward, by giving the PCs the satisfaction of catching the culprit, or the reward can be in the form of treasure as well, especially if the puzzle involved no crime. If the PCs are close to the solution, a hint or action from the culprit can be helpful. Giving the PCs the solution if they are clueless devalues the mystery; even the greatest sleuths are beaten occasionally.

McGuffins

McGuffins are objects, money, or knowledge that drive the plot. Treasure—be it monetary or magical, tangible or intangible—is a strong motivation for PCs, who will often mount arduous quests to find it on the say-so of sages, moldy scrolls, or half-mad hermits. But there's no reason the treasure has to be real. Fabulous wealth and power build their own tales, often without a firm basis in fact.

In Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, Gutman, a collector, spins a story about a stolen jewel-encrusted, golden bird. Gutman's story, interspersed with historical references, minor but convincing details, and authoritative sounding book titles, is convincing. But when he and his cohorts finally find the bird, they discover they have been chasing a fake. Gutman believes the original has been hidden, but the reader realizes Gutman might never have known where it was—or that perhaps the real falcon never even existed.

The McGuffin doesn't have to be treasure, as such. Knowledge, love, or prestige can be just as powerful an incentive. In *The Big Sleep* by Raymond Chandler, the McGuffin is the knowledge of what happened to the man Philip Marlowe is hired to find; it isn't long before the missing man becomes of secondary importance. Marlowe discovers that he would rather be romantically involved with the missing man's wife than find her husband or be paid.

Presenting PCs with rivals for the McGuffin or letting them find an exciting treasure that differs greatly from their expectations can make this tactic worthwhile. Evidence of a past crime or its perpetrator, the location of a long-lost relative or friend, or even the rumor of an evil stronghold deserving obliteration can all serve this purpose. The point of this device is to get the plot and action moving and characters, both PC and NPC, interacting.

An adventurer who secretly resented her associates leaves her treasures to whoever can find it first, then gives clues to those she felt wronged by (including a PC). The treasure does exist, but the adventurer has booby-trapped it with guardians and magical wards.

After doing a good deed for a small town, the PCs are rewarded with information about the location of a magic item, such as a *wand of fireball* or a *staff of fire*. Upon retrieving the item, the PCs might find that the object either has completely different powers or that it has drawbacks or is cursed.

Show and Tell

As it is often said, sometimes the best place to hide something is in plain sight. Edgar Allan Poe injected this tradition into his mystery, "The Purloined Letter." Police search an extortionist's house, trying to find the letters he uses to blackmail a noble, but fail. Detective C. Auguste Dupin discovers the documents in a letter rack, where the blackmailer kept them among his regular correspondence. Hiding an object in plain sight doesn't work for all parties, but it can be effective for parties who try complex or player-knowledge solutions first.

A variant of this is a Sherlock Holmes mystery, "Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb." An engineer is taken by carriage to examine a complex and diabolical machine. The windows are darkened, so the engineer cannot see any landmarks or the direction the carriage is taking. An hour later, he reaches the destination. After escaping, he falls unconscious and wakes up near the railway station where he was picked up by the carriage. He thinks he has been spared by the criminals, but Holmes sees the truth: the engineer was not transported after his escape at all, and the hour-long trip was a half-hour away from the station and a half-hour back to it. The criminals created the illusion of time and distance without any recourse to magic.

A king has ordered his wizard to discover a way for the king to live forever, but the wizard's experiments are repeatedly interfered with by someone using information known only to the king and wizard. The wizard, alarmed by what her employer might do with eternal life, is sabotaging her own work.

A wealthy landowner is afraid someone will kill her for her newly acquired prize stallion; its three previous owners were killed days after buying it. The horse—which is actually an elven druid using *wild shape*—is the killer. The druid is determined to take revenge on those who have despoiled the nearby forest where she was raised.

Excluding the Impossible

In "The Adventure of Beryl Coronet," Sherlock Holmes says, "When you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." Holmes claimed it was one of his old maxims, and it's good advice for readers or players. It also holds an important reminder to DMs: The key word is "improbable." The solution cannot be impossible.

The type of mystery this applies to most is the "locked room" mystery, in which it seems physically impossible for the criminal to have entered or exited the room where the crime took place. One of the very first detective stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" by Poe, can also lay claim to being the first locked room mystery.

In the story, two women are murdered in a sealed room, with all windows shut and a chimney too small for any human's escape. Additionally, no one is sure what language the murderer shouted in: a man who cannot speak French says it is French, another unacquainted with Italian said it was in that language, while yet another says it was Spanish. With so many conflicting choices, the detective, Dupin, makes the improbable assumption that the murderer's shouts were in no language at all. He is proven correct when he manages to discover a sailor whose pet orangutan escaped with a razor, climbed a lightning rod, and jumped through the women's open window. After committing the crime, the animal left the same way, closing the window behind him.

The "locked room" aspect of this type of mystery is difficult to duplicate in a D&D campaign, since there are numerous ways to explain how someone got in or out of the room. However, with anti-magic measures and clever locks—or doors without any locks at all—the DM can challenge players immensely.

Townsfolk have reported a group of "dark elves" who raid and loot the town during the night, although other than skin color, descriptions of the culprits are widely varied. In reality, a group of townspeople have been committing the robberies and murders, and they began circulating false rumors about the dark elves to cover up their evil deeds. Once the rumors spread, people outside the conspiracy imagined they saw the drow.

While chasing a powerful wizard down a darkened corridor, the PCs find a thick door with its opening mechanism and hinges impossibly obscured. The door is a permanent illusion, complete with illusory traps, created long before by the fleeing wizard in case a hasty retreat was ever needed.

A fence, after being caught with stolen goods, tells police where the thieves' hideout is, but the police find the fence's description of the house and its occupants wrong in every particular. The police find no evidence of trickery, magical or mundane, because the thieves' sorcerer cast illusions over the premises while the fence was present.

4. The Vacationer

When extraplanar or extraterrestrial villains get vacation time they love to visit the current hot spot—the player characters' world. Of course, where these evil creatures go, carnage is sure to follow. The PCs are chosen to serve as the local welcoming committee and to send the creature back where it came from.

The vacationing creatures are from a very militaristic culture, and have been given furlough by their superiors. Being a very violent race, their idea of recreation is fighting. Unfortunately, they can't differentiate between human warriors and human peasants. To end the killings that follow, the PCs will have to deal with these soldiers. To complicate things, if the PCs fight the creatures and even one manages to escape alive, it might send for reinforcements. The second group won't be mere tourists.

The creature comes to the PCs' world with the intent of acquiring some souvenirs for its special collection. This creature is equipped with a magic item capable of shrinking entire buildings (and all items and people within) for the purpose of transport back to its own world. The PCs will have to confront this visiting collector before their whole town vanishes.

5. The Artist

This villain considers herself an artist. Her evil plans are designed not to gain wealth and power, but to create an artistic and aesthetic masterpiece. Art might be subjective, but this villain's art is twisted and purely evil. A medusa might decorate her lair with statues of her victims; there are many similar examples:

The villain is a lich who, in order to gain favor with her evil god, begins building him a temple. Unfortunately, her material of choice for this temple will be the skulls of good creatures. Many innocents would have to die to complete the intended structure, and of course, the PCs are high on the villain's list of prospective raw materials.

The villain has a magic item that can transform objects such as buildings, trees, animals, and people into paintings. Naturally, she uses this item on the most beautiful and interesting things she can find. PCs who face this villain must be wary, lest they end up becoming "artwork" themselves.

The villain performs twisted surgeries and torture to transform her captives into grotesque creatures she considers "living art." She doesn't care that many of her "subjects" die during the creation process.

BEWARE OF GREEKS

Sometimes the villain is the one who seems to help the PCs rather than those who threaten and attack them. A pawnbroker's employee in Doyle's "The Red-Headed League" points out an advertisement for good money for simple work for all men with red hair. While the red-headed pawnbroker leaps at the chance, it's actually a ploy by the employee and the administrator of the supposed Red-Headed League to keep the pawnbroker out of his shop while the two tunnel into a nearby bank. In a modern example, a lawyer in Steven Hamilton's *A Cold Day in Paradise* hires an ex-cop as his personal investigator. The lawyer arranges for the ex-cop to get a private investigator's license and gun permit quickly, but the lawyer's sole purpose is to place the ex-cop into a situation where he will shoot the lawyer's co-conspirator months later.

Great villains can combine long-term plans and seeming friendships. If the PCs experience personal attacks, they might suspect a new friend, but it would be unlikely they would see a long-time friend or acquaintance as a danger. They might even ask for the culprit's help, sealing their doom.

The mayor has asked the PCs to drive off or kill a band of orcs that has been preying on travelers and merchants in the area, and she is willing to help with men, equipment, and money. Unknown to the PCs, the mayor was in cahoots with the bandits, but now she is trying to free herself from their leader's escalating demands for more loot.

The inn the PCs have been staying at is a great place to get information, and the staff treats its guests well. Unfortunately, its employees—from bartender down to stable boy—are fronts for a criminal organization, who will plant evidence of the group's crimes in the PCs' rooms at the right time.

A reliable informant tells the PCs what the next move of the chief henchman of their archenemy will be. The information will be correct in every way, and the henchman will be caught by surprise; the archenemy sacrificed the henchman to get the PCs away from their home base for a while.

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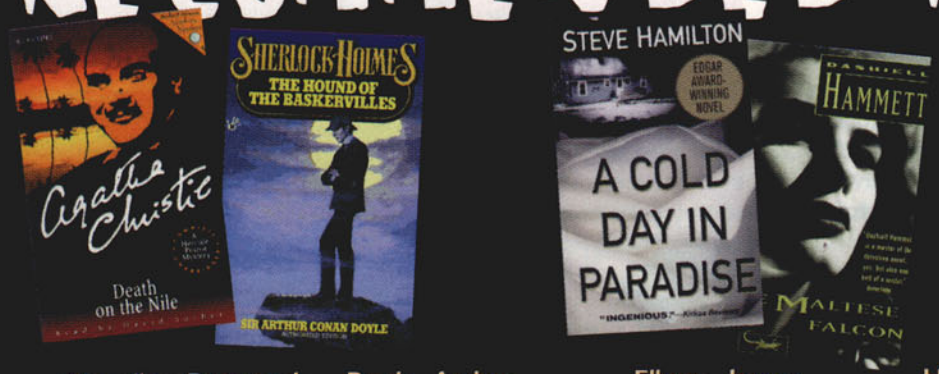

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Why, Not Who

Since PCs have ways around mysteries that the great literary detectives did not (*speak with dead, divination, commune, scrying*, and so on), DMs can give the PCs a procedural rather than a whodunit. A whodunit is a mystery in which the plot and discovering the criminal's identity are most important, but a procedural is a mystery in which the methods used to uncover and prove the cause of the mystery are most important. In other words, the DM should make the PCs prove the truth or bring the culprit to justice rather than discover who the culprit is. The PCs can even witness the crime if acting on the knowledge is difficult enough.

The why of a crime can be even more intriguing than the crime itself. There can be a multitude of extenuating circumstances: self-defense, moral depravity of the victim, or the revelation of the criminal's identity might cause harm to innocents. Throwing roadblocks in the PCs' way can add an extra dimension to a mystery.

Other considerations could intervene as well. In Rex Stout's "Immune to Murder," the culprit gets away with a murder of passion because he has diplomatic immunity. Alternatively, little purpose might be served by prosecuting a case, as in Ellery Queen's *The Finishing Stroke*, in which the detective solves two murders 27 years after they happened. The murderer is 92 years old and repentant, however, and since the detective lacks hard evidence, he drops the case. In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Dupin does not inform the authorities about the sailor or his orangutan because he believes it was a horrible accident.

A half-orc has been seen on the waterfront beating lone travelers and touching off barroom brawls. This activity culminates with the death of the commander of the guard. The half-orc came to the city to find his father who, he was told, was a rich man. After he discovered through intimidation and violence that the city's mayor was his father, the mayor sent the commander to silence his son.

The PCs have proven that a powerful priest of Olidammara killed a shoemaker, but they don't know why the priest had a grudge against such an innocuous citizen. Only after more investigation do the PCs learn that the shoemaker was a former rogue who went into hiding after informing on a thieves' guild in order to escape prosecution.

6. The Psychologist

This archetype is the cruelest, most sadistic of villains, one who seeks not to kill his victims, but to destroy their sanity. Madness can be a fate worse than death. A particularly creative villain might use several sadistic techniques to break the hero's psyche.

The villain captures a hero he intends to drive mad. Using a magic mirror that accesses the hero's memory, the villain can show the PC every failure she has ever experienced in her life. The villain hopes that after repeated treatments, the PC will come to believe in her own worthlessness, and lose her sanity as a result.

The villain is an illusionist who, after discovering that the PC has arachnophobia, bombards the hero with illusions of demonic arachnids in encounter after encounter. Believing the illusions to be real, the hero might crack.

The villain hires doppelgangers to mimic a person a PC once loved and believes is now lost or dead. After the creature gains the hero's trust and love, it turns into a monster and attacks her. Could a PC fight a beast who resembled her long lost love and still retain her sanity?

7. The Benefactor

The villain either conducts an experiment on herself or is changed by some outside force. The changes leave the villain horribly deformed, but she considers this side effect worth the gain of incredible powers. These powers are so amazing that she wishes to share them with others. Unfortunately, this villain intends to bypass the "little detail" of asking permission first. Of course, the villain is insane and fails to recognize that creating a race with superpowers will result in disaster.

The villain is the town mayor, who has used an unholy ritual to turn herself into a werewolf. So pleased is she with her new abilities, she decides to spread lycanthropy to every resident and visitor to her town. The PCs have their work cut out for them should the villain succeed—curing one infected werewolf is difficult enough, but hundreds?

The villain is a low-level psion who creates a psionic apparatus that she hopes will strengthen her mental powers. She's successful, but she becomes deformed in the process. Unknown to her, another side effect is gradual muscle degeneration. Feeling that others could benefit from her device, the villain plans to flood the entire city with her psionic-enhancer. The PCs must try to stop this mad genius before the city receives "too much of a good thing."

8. The False Reformer

Many villains come to see the error of their ways and seek to redeem themselves by aiding the heroes. What would happen if a villain decided to pretend to reform? He could gain the trust of the heroes and convince them that they have a new, powerful ally. By the time the heroes realize they've been duped, they might have given the villain confidential information that will help him in his evil plots.

The villain claims to have reformed and offers to help the PCs against a mutual foe. Under pressure, the villain might even admit that it's merely an arrangement of convenience, but in truth the arrangement is between the villain and the PCs' other foe. When the chips are down, their erstwhile ally's true loyalty—to the other villain—is revealed.

The PCs meet the villain's henchman, who claims to have broken away from his evil control. At first, the henchman's tips are helpful, and the PCs believe they are foiling the villain's plans. As time goes by, however, the henchman begins to give less accurate tips, leading the PCs into ambushes or distracting them so that the villain can perform his evil elsewhere. Since the henchman feigns being lied to when his tips don't work, it might be some time before the PCs discover his treachery.

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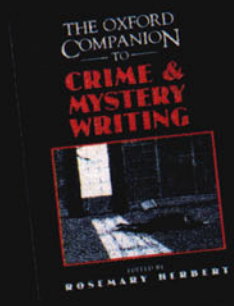

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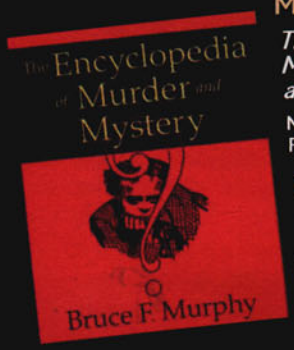

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PLAY FAIR

The idea of "fair play" is that the mystery should be solvable by the average reader. In a 1929 essay, Father Ronald Knox set forth ten principles of fair play, which have been left largely untouched and are still followed. It should be noted, though, that not all mysteries observe the rules of fair play, with the ever-perceptive Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot often violating the standards (especially Rule #1). DMs don't necessarily have to play "fair," either, but like all rules of fiction, these should only be broken for good reason.

1. No clues withheld from the reader. Even DMs can't get away with keeping important information from players if their characters would legitimately know about them. Little makes players more upset than being deprived of hints they believe they deserve.

2. No supernatural explanations. On its face, the DM can ignore this rule since the supernatural is such an ingrained part of D&D. However, Knox inserted Rule #2 because the supernatural violated the observable rules of this world; the DM must likewise consistently obey the laws of nature that govern the world she creates.

In D&D, magic and the supernatural are expected and often integral parts of a campaign. In each game world, magic usually follows a set of laws that apply to PC and NPC alike. Since the players (and characters) know the rules of magic and the supernatural, using it as an explanation for a mystery is consistent with the natural laws of the campaign world. In effect, the supernatural covered in the D&D rules is natural to most campaign worlds. Stepping outside the rules of magic set forth for a world violates Rule #2.

3. No more than one secret passage. A strict numerical limit on secret doors is difficult to set in D&D, with its emphasis on traps, concealed and secret doors, and other architectural secrets. Knox made this rule because the excitement of finding secret passages quickly turns to boredom. DMs are well advised to consider this when designing dungeons and castles.

4. No sudden appearance of twins or doubles. This was outlawed to eliminate the easiest and most painless way to shift the blame from the obvious suspect to someone else. It destroys eyewitness credibility and adds extra credence to shaky alibis. However, with D&D's multitude of shapeshifters, players are often more receptive to this trick. If it is used, the players should probably get a small hint that something is wrong. Some impersonations can be so excellent, though, that there might be no way to tell the difference.

5. The detective cannot be the criminal. Since the PCs are generally the detectives, this isn't a major problem. Using PCs under some sort of compulsion, however, can bypass this stricture, though this might upset some players. The DM certainly should not attempt this if it would be disruptive to the campaign, and his knowledge of the players must be the deciding factor. In any case, there should be clues that something is wrong with the responsible PC(s).

6. No fortuitous accidents or intuitions to help the sleuth. Coincidence is the mystery writer's most overused and hackneyed tool. A staple of cheap novels and Hardy Boys books, fictional detectives are far luckier than PCs should ever be. At most, PCs should be graced with a fortunate chance only to bump them in the correct direction as a last resort. Anything else quickly erodes the believability of the adventure.

Agatha Christie's *Curtain*, however, uses coincidence in another manner. The murderer is only tangentially involved in each of the crimes he commits, seeming to flit between them by unlucky chance. However, he actually uses psychology to convince others to commit crimes, pushing their buttons until they do the very things he claims he wants to stop. In a D&D campaign, certain spells, such as *suggestion*, can make this kind of murderer even more effective, but it becomes harder to downplay the coincidence angle.

7. The first-person narrator cannot hide her thoughts from the reader. The DM is the narrator in this case. The DM takes the first-person role in two situations: describing what PCs observe and acting as NPCs. Since NPCs are

naturally separate from the players, the DM can hide what she wants from the players in that regard. However, she cannot hide clues from players to help keep the solution to a mystery secret (see Rule #1). The clues do not have to be emphasized any more than other details, but they must be presented. DMs should also be careful not to bury the clues beneath a mountain of detail. While this is technically fair, the players will probably grow sick of having to make notes about every bit of dungeon dressing.

8. The first-person narrator cannot be too much dumber than an average reader. This applies equally to the DM's capacity as both NPC and narrator. NPCs and PCs run the gamut in intelligence and wisdom, and they should be played as such when it comes to observing and relating description. When dealing with a mixed group of PCs, the default description should be about the level of the average character. NPCs should be as observant as their ability scores and skills indicate since making them too observant or unobservant might seem too great a coincidence.

9. No unheard of poisons or complex gadgets may be used. This prohibition was issued because these elements were overused. Exotic poisons were used so often they seemed more common than arsenic, strychnine, or household rat poison, and complex machines often ended up receiving a great deal of description but had little actual effect. The lesson in this for the DM is to reserve the exotic to unsettle the players. When the PCs have seen their fifth unknown poison or sixth mysterious stranger of the adventure, they will be yawning, not gasping.

10. No Chinamen. Knox probably included this as a lighthearted poke at author Sax Rohmer and his imitators. In 1912, Rohmer created Fu Manchu, a villain whose fame outlived Rohmer's. Manchu was a scientist, a leader of organized crime, and the head of secret societies: in essence, a supervillain nearly thirty years before comic books made them so popular. The prohibition is aimed more at criminal masterminds than a national or ethnic group.

A mastermind villain will probably be accepted at some point during the PCs' development. However, this rule does include valuable advice: The Chinese were vilified because they were easily identified as different, and their increased immigration in Western societies made them feared. It's probably unwise to make all the campaign's villains of one racial or ethnic group or class. It will bore players eventually, and it makes spotting the PCs' adversaries easier ("Look! A black-robed wizard! Get her!"). At best, it's repetitive, and at worst, it encourages formulaic and racist thinking in the PCs.

An amazing aspect of mysteries is that authors are inventing new ways to puzzle readers and putting new spins on old tricks. In fact, if they stopped their inventiveness, they would lose their readers, who are veterans of the turns and tricks of the mystery novel. That's the final lesson: DMs who stay inventive stay ahead of their players, keeping them guessing until the end. If they don't, the ends of their campaigns won't be mysteries at all.

9. The Close Friend

Many heroes incorrectly assume that, due to their nature, villains have no friends. But villains are people too; they have emotions and the same need as others for companionship. When the actions of the heroes endanger the villain's friend, that villain can become a truly nasty opponent.

The villain, a warrior, has a sick friend, and only the administrations of an extremely expensive healer can help. Fortunately, this warrior has found an intelligent sword and knows someone willing to buy it. On his way to sell the weapon however, he runs into his enemies—the PCs. Suspicious when they see the villain with a magic blade that talks, they might decide to take the sword from him for safety's sake. However, the villain has neither the time nor the desire to fight, since each minute brings his friend closer to death. If the PCs steal the weapon, he's more than likely to tear the town apart to get it back. And if the delay results in his friend's death, the villain's wrath will be terrible indeed.

The villain has been foiled at every turn by the clever PCs. Desperate, he sends out a cry for help to his childhood friend. Together the two are much more deadly and can think of new ways of destroying the PCs. Perhaps one of them will send the PCs on a wild goose chase, while the other breaks into their lodgings, leaving chilling hints that their enemy is no longer working alone . . .

10. The Bored Victim

Crime doesn't pay? Cheaters never prosper? Rubbish. What happens if a villain (particularly a long-lived villain) is successful in reaching her goals? What does one do after defeating every foe, conquering all available lands, and obtaining the limit of one's power? The villain might quickly grow bored and seek new ways to amuse herself. This might bring her into conflict with the PCs in very bizarre ways.

The villain is a warrior who has yet to be defeated in battle, and as a result she has grown weary of what are now "typical" fights to her. Out of boredom, she has created a lair for herself inside a secluded, gloomy castle, which she has filled with exotic arenas: a platform built precariously over a pool of lava, an arena filled with two feet of water and swarming with piranha, a room built with electrified walls, and others. The villain posts a public challenge—she will pay a small fortune to anyone who can both find her and provide a good fight. Thus far, all who have sought her out have not returned. If a PC dares to try it, the villain will allow him to choose his weapon and the arena. Still, he might not have what it takes to defeat the villain.

The villain is a vampire that calls herself "The Circus Assassin." After years of hiring herself out as a skilled killer who has yet to fail at an assassination attempt, she has become tired of killing people by "normal" methods. Seeking new stimulation, and using her near-limitless wealth, she has built a carnival-like dungeon that is nothing more than a torturous deathtrap. The villain fills her carnival with clockwork monsters shaped like clowns, performers, and circus animals. Each room includes a trap given a carnival theme. Now, this undead villain kills her victims by transporting them to her hideous "funhouse," where she watches the entertainment in hopes of some relief from her boredom. If someone hires her to target the PCs, will they survive her murderous circus?

This list is by no means complete. A villain's plans are limited only by the DM's imagination. One of the best things about a fantasy backdrop is that anything can happen. If you want a villain with a weapon that can turn flowers into monsters—no problem! Want an evil, telekinetic, fiend-worshiping leprechaun with the strength of a titan? Sure, why not? The more bizarre and creative the villain is, the more fun the PCs will have when they encounter and—hopefully—defeat her.

UNHALLOWED GROUND

The creak of rusting carriage gates, crumbling headstones overgrown with weeds, the sinister yet inviting shadow cast by a mausoleum, an open grave waiting to be filled: All of these are features of a graveyard setting. But a graveyard can be more than just atmospheric details. With a little effort, it can be as richly textured and vividly imagined as any castle or dungeon.

BUILDING A FANTASY GRAVEYARD

by Rudy Thauberger • illustrated by Val Mayerik

A cemetery is a place designed by the living to honor the dead. Unlike castles or dungeons, cemeteries aren't constructed with a specific strategic purpose. Rather, they are built over time by many hands. There might be rules governing how burials are conducted and what sort of monuments can be erected, but a cemetery is primarily the product of hundreds of individual choices made over years or centuries.

Most cemeteries fall into one of two types: picturesque and monumental. Each type has distinctive features, both in terms of how it is laid out and what sort of monuments it contains.

Picturesque Cemeteries

Picturesque cemeteries, common in North America, are generally pastoral, set in pleasant natural surroundings. They're usually located outside the city on rolling hills, next to rivers, or overlooking the ocean. If they're inside the city, the cemeteries are set in parks or gardens, with many trees and shrubs, and perhaps even a pond or grotto.

Picturesque cemeteries are loosely organized. They might be divided into sections by religion, family, or social class, but the divisions will be few and haphazardly enforced. Individual plots are laid out almost randomly. A pauper's grave might sit next to a rich man's mausoleum. The older the graveyard, the more chaotic and messy it becomes.

Open space is one of the hallmarks of a picturesque cemetery, with larger mausoleums and crypts scattered amid smaller headstones. Simple winding paths guide visitors around, although larger cemeteries have carriage paths and gates wide enough to allow the transport of coffins. There might also be benches for people to sit on and one or two small shrines.

Monuments in a picturesque cemetery tend to be eclectic and varied in their influences. An English country graveyard might contain simple headstones and plain wooden crosses, whereas the famous Père-Lachaise cemetery in Paris contains elaborate sculptures, stained glass, and mosaics. Graveyard monuments can also include portraits of the deceased, cameos, busts, calligraphy, or metalwork.

When it comes to designing adventures, the lack of organization in a picturesque cemetery is one of its strengths. Mistaken identity, lost graves, and forgotten treasures can all be used to draw adventurers into the graveyard. Use the mess to your advantage, creating unexpected twists and surprises. For example, an adventuring party could discover that the magic ring they're looking for is buried in one of five anonymous graves. One of the other graves, however, contains a fiend, a cursed sword, or a spirit seeking vengeance.

Monumental Cemeteries

Monumental cemeteries, common in the Mediterranean, are much more formal and elaborate. They resemble miniature

cities, laid out in a grid pattern and divided into many sections with ordered streets and row upon row of grave markers and mausoleums. They might have large stone gateways, vaulted galleries containing dozens of individual tombs, and communal mausoleums with tiers of niches containing busts and urns. They also tend to be highly restrictive, with complex rules as to who can be buried where.

Visiting the dead is a regular routine in cultures that create monumental cemeteries. Although the cemeteries appear much more crowded and claustrophobic than picturesque ones, they're also more intimate and more closely tied to the communities that created them. Mausoleums and tombs are often refurbished and updated in the latest style. For this reason, the look of a monumental cemetery is more orderly and consistent. It might accumulate influences from a number of different eras, with classical sculptures sitting next to gothic spires, but the varied influences will be integrated into the cemetery as a whole.

Monumental cemeteries contain a few wide boulevards to accommodate carriages, but they're otherwise made up of narrow streets. Covered walkways might be a feature of the more aristocratic sections, as well as private chapels. Some of the streets might even have signs or be lit.

Don't mistake the orderliness of a monumental cemetery for a lack of passion on the part of those honoring the dead. Where a mausoleum in a picturesque cemetery might contain one or two sculptures, a comparable mausoleum in a monumental cemetery could contain a dozen or more figures arranged in an elaborate setting. Re-creations of famous battles, copies of well-known works of art, or even intricate floral arrangements are all features of this type of cemetery.

Monumental cemeteries are great for complex, multi-layered storylines. Events taking place in the cemetery affect the community surrounding it, and the reverse is also true. An adventure involving a monumental cemetery could begin with a nobleman that hires the PCs to investigate the vandalism of his family crypt. The PCs discover that a rival family is responsible for the vandalism, and furthermore, the crypt contains the body of one of the rival family's ancestors who went missing many years ago, murdered by one of the nobleman's ancestors. The PCs must then deal with the ancestor's ghost, the rival family, and their own patron, who wants to keep his dark family secret from being exposed.

Nonhuman Graveyards

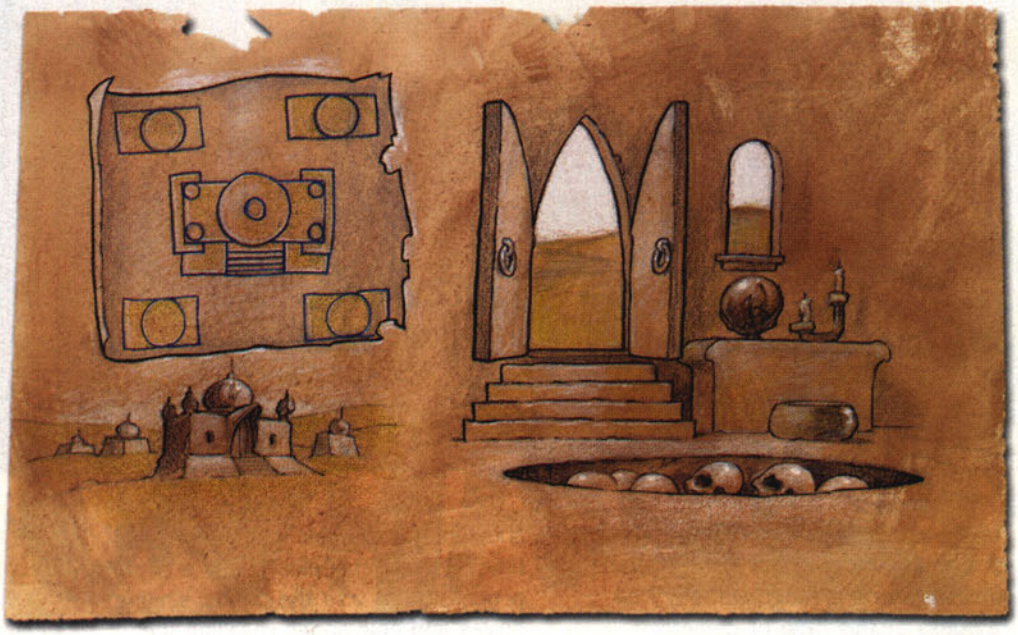
In the D&D world, most large graveyards contain a mix of human and nonhuman grave sites, with relatively little distinction between them. However, in areas where nonhumans make up at least a large minority of the population, they will have their own cemeteries with unique features tailored to their particular cultures.

Dwarven Graveyards: The dwarven love of stone is powerfully expressed in their cemeteries. Graves aren't dug; they're carved out of solid rock, often in large mountain caves. Tombs are ornate, well-crafted, and grand, with elaborate sculptures and runes marking each burial place. The cemeteries are strictly divided by clan, rather than religious or social affiliation, and most clans are extremely conscientious about honoring their dead. Several times a year, clan elders lead a ritual procession to visit the tombs, singing dirges and epic songs recalling the deeds of the fallen. These rituals often go on for days.

Elven Graveyards: Elven graveyards are more subtle than dwarven ones, usually consisting of nothing more elaborate than a grove in the woods or a pool at the bottom of a waterfall. Formal grave markers or special monuments are rare, reserved for royalty or famous heroes. Bodies are often cremated and the ashes scattered. This does not mean that elves place no value upon honoring their departed. On the contrary, placing the body of a deceased elf in its native soil is of paramount importance in elven culture. Elven graveyards resonate powerfully with those who understand their history

When elves do construct formal tombs for their departed, they use sound, light, and scent, along with stone and earth. Statues, fountains, and painstakingly sculpted trees and shrubs all combine to create an atmosphere of wonder and remembrance.

Halfling Graveyards: Halfling cemeteries most closely resemble human ones, tending to be simple, unpretentious, even intimate places. Modest headstones are preferred to grandiose mausoleums and elaborate statuary, but each marker has a unique feature that is meant to evoke some sense of the halfling beneath it. This can take the form of a heartfelt inscription, a small carving of the deceased's favorite flower, or even a small cameo containing a portrait of the departed halfling. Some halfling cemeteries contain burrow tombs, small catacombs dug into a low hill or mound. A burrow contains



windows to let in the light and a large hearth to keep the interior warm in the winter. Fully furnished rooms are provided inside, filled with memorabilia of the departed halflings buried within the walls.

Gnome Graveyards: The graveyards of gnomes combine the intimacy of halfling cemeteries with the craftsmanship of dwarven monuments. Small grave markers are elaborately carved, every inch of stone filled with tiny details. They are often painted in bright colors and great care is taken to keep them in good condition. Fresh flowers and other small gifts are a common feature of gnome graves.

Graveyards and Magic

Magic can profoundly affect the structure and appearance of a graveyard. The graveyard itself can be placed in a fantastic setting, floating on a cloud or on the ethereal plane, but the ground rules for constructing cemeteries remain unchanged. The cemetery must be a public place, and it must reflect the culture that created it.

On a more mundane level, magic can also be used on individual monuments, either for defense or decoration.

Defensive Magic: Defensive spells cast on mausoleums and crypts don't differ much from the spells cast to keep intruders out of castles or dungeons. *Symbol, glyph of warding,* and *fire trap* can all be useful. Keep in mind, however, that a cemetery is a public place, and civic officials generally don't take kindly to having their citizens blasted by high-level magic just because they wandered a bit off the main path. Destructive spells are usually limited to the interior of the mausoleum, with the entrance sealed by an *arcane lock* spell. Even then, since spells like *glyph of warding* must be renewed after they've been activated, time and neglect eliminate most defensive magic from graveyards.

Decorative Magic: This type of benign magic can create wonders that are admired for decades, even centuries. Imagine peering into a crypt and seeing a permanent image of a beloved sage sitting at his writing desk or a fierce warrior in full battle armor standing guard over her own coffin. Think about the artful effect of *continual flames* placed inside colored lanterns or behind stained glass. Don't shy away from extravagance or sentimentality. A rich merchant might have his carefully preserved body placed in an iron coffin made transparent with spells. A halfling matriarch's family could pay a wizard to cast a permanent *unseen servant* spell on her headstone to keep her grave plot tidy for eternity. Permanent *magic mouth* spells could greet visitors to a particular mausoleum and *ghost sound* spells could play a dearly departed's favorite song.

Malevolent Magic: Malevolent spells can provide a source of adventure for your cemetery. Imagine a family crypt under a curse that secretly drains life energy from anyone who comes near it. When enough levels have been drained, one of the crypt's inhabitants rises as a wight and goes on a rampage. The PCs would have to track down the crypt and remove the curse, preferably without destroying the crypt and further violating the bodies left inside. Other malevolent spells you might consider for your graveyard include *desecrate, doom, feeblemind, spike growth,* or *trap the soul.*

The Invisible Landscape

Besides its physical features, a cemetery is made up of an invisible landscape of stories. Lovers, enemies, friends, rivals, murderers, and their victims all lie in the same earth. Some of their stories are finished; others have been cut short by death. For game purposes, unfinished stories are best.

- Separated lovers struggle to reunite.
- A murder victim seeks revenge.
- A man falsely convicted of a crime tries to clear his name.
- Two noble families continue a lifelong feud into the afterlife.

Stories like these can form the basis of an adventure or simply function as random encounters. The key is to break the story up into its component parts and place them in different areas of the graveyard, creating an emotional landscape that matches the physical one. Then, as the adventurers encounter different parts of the story, they can piece it together.

For example, Ignatio and Cesare were two gentlemen in love with the same woman, Lucia. Lucia loved both men, but preferred Ignatio. Furious, Cesare killed Ignatio and hid the body in an unmarked grave. Lucia and Cesare eventually married, but Lucia never stopped seeking her lost love. Finally, in despair, she took her own life and is now buried in a section of the graveyard reserved for those who died without receiving last rites from the local church. Cesare lived on for many years, becoming very wealthy and powerful, but also bitter and decadent. When he finally died, he was buried in a magnificent mausoleum, alone. Now, all three of their spirits haunt the graveyard. Ignatio seeks revenge on Cesare, Lucia wants to be reunited with Ignatio, and Cesare has been condemned to live on as an undead mockery of his former self. PCs could encounter all three spirits in the course of an adventure in different parts of the graveyard and might have to find a way to put all three of them to rest. Perhaps they could discover the location of Ignatio's grave from Cesare's diary,

hidden in his mausoleum, and reveal it to the wandering Lucia.

Graveyard stories don't have to be complex. They can be simple and colorful. A famous poet buried in the cemetery wanders the grounds reciting his last unfinished poem. Five young plague victims relive happier times by playing hide-and-seek among the gravestones. The important thing is that the stories help give the cemetery some historical context. Remember, history accumulates in graveyards. A century-old graveyard might contain veterans from half a dozen wars, victims of one or two epidemics, and several generations of many families.

Inhabitants, Dead and Otherwise

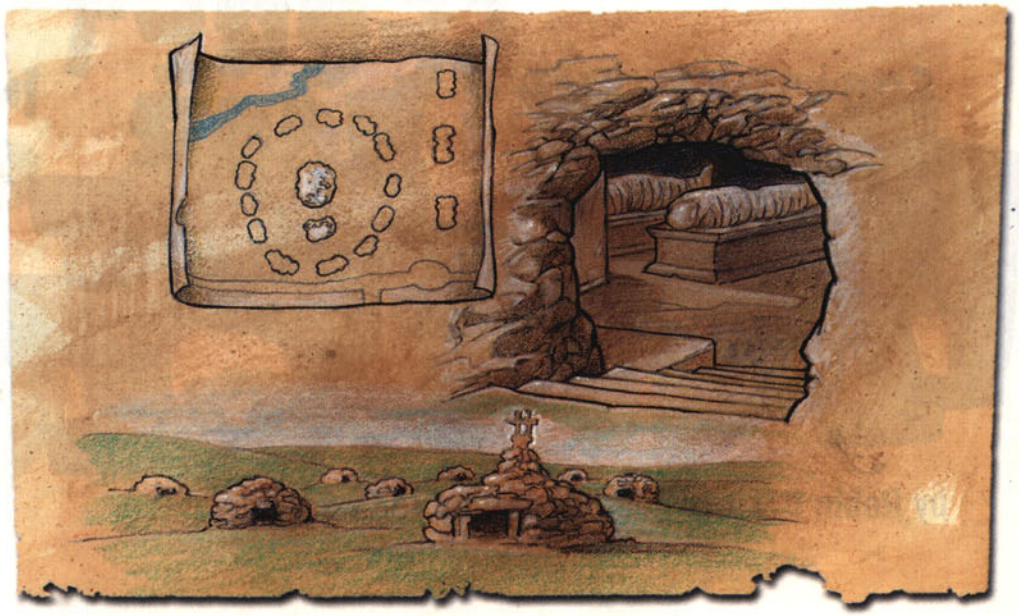
When it comes to filling a graveyard with monsters, there's nothing wrong with the usual assortment of ghosts and ghouls—nothing beats a good ghost story—but graveyard monsters don't have to be limited to the undead. A cemetery doesn't exist in isolation. It's part of the local environment, whether rural or urban, yet curiously separate.

This makes it a perfect meeting ground between the natural and the supernatural. A thief could be hiding his loot in one of the mausoleums, or the graveyard could be the meeting place of a secret society. A doppelganger might wander among the tombstones, pretending to be the risen spirit of a victim's loved one. Monstrous fungi and molds, carnivorous plants, wandering will-o'-wisps, even a treant could all be found in a graveyard under the right circumstances.

Not just any monster will do, however. The common feature of all graveyard monsters is their desire to hide themselves from public view while remaining in close proximity to the city or town. A pride of lions wouldn't make good graveyard monsters, but a pair of exiled mind flayers would.

Day and Night

The transition from day to night is what brings the graveyard to life, turning a pleasant setting into a terrifying one. Use the transition to create tension. Gradually transform the mundane features of the graveyard into threatening ones. Lengthen the shadows and make them start to writhe. Give an angelic figure atop a tombstone a demonic, threatening cast to its features. Make it apparent that a different world is emerging as the sunlight fades.



Once night falls, the graveyard becomes a place set apart from its surroundings and the normal daytime rules. Leaving might become more difficult, if not impossible. A new reality comes into being during the nighttime, so let your imagination run wild. The possibilities are endless.

Supernatural Features

A fantasy graveyard can contain many supernatural features—ghostly lights, music, strange smells or sensations—that make it unique. They can be simple (a strange moan heard at sunset, a chilly breeze felt on even the hottest day, or the scent of lilacs) or they can be more detailed. For instance, a gold coin appears on a different tombstone every night that grants a boon (or inflicts a curse) on the one who finds it. Perhaps the spirits of an entire family hold a "reunion" once a year, complete with music, dancing, formal dress, and ancient arguments.

Supernatural features can act like traps in a dungeon. Imagine a grave that suddenly opens when someone walks over it. Certain areas of the cemetery might cause strange compulsions, duplicating the effects of such spells as *scare, confusion, Tasha's hideous laughter, Otto's irresistible dance,* or *symbol.* Don't overdo it. Just as too many traps in a dungeon can become tedious, too many supernatural features in a graveyard will distract from the main story.

Getting Players Involved

Once the graveyard is created, there is one major obstacle. A realistic cemetery, even a neglected one, appears pleasant on the surface. During the day it's a park, and most of the nastier inhabitants are hidden from public view. Things only get interesting after dark. To make a graveyard setting work, the DM must get the PCs to visit it at night. That's when the true nature of a graveyard is revealed, and the setting is at its most atmospheric and dangerous.

Getting PCs into the cemetery after dark isn't all that difficult. If the characters or their quarry are engaged in anything the least bit suspicious (like digging up a grave or breaking into a crypt), they'll probably prefer to do their work under cover of darkness. If not, the DM can create plausible reasons to compel a nighttime visit. For instance, the PCs have to read a secret inscription on a tombstone that's only illuminated under the light of the full moon. Time could pass differently in certain areas of the graveyard, making night fall unexpectedly, or a party that disturbs a certain grave could be magically barred from leaving before sunset.

A good fantasy graveyard is as much a work of art as it is a place. It's a library of stories waiting to be told, a repository of secrets waiting to be revealed—and it's never really finished. Even in the smallest graveyard, there's always room for more.

IN DISGUISE

Earlier, there was a crazy old drunkard propped up against the library gate. He might have seen something, you figured. But when he started to mumble incoherently, you gave up on him. Now the drunkard's disappeared. Maybe you should have pressed him a little or tried to sober him up. Maybe he really did know something.

You look pleadingly at the DM. There must be a way past this plot deadlock.

Don't Let the Choices Get You Down

Some groups of players find it easier to get lost in an investigative scenario than in a dungeon's lightless depths. Like Dave, who distrusts the librarian no matter how hard the DM tries to move his attention elsewhere, some players pursue fruitless avenues of investigation long after they've been given every indication they should pursue a new direction. Others completely ignore real sources of knowledge, dismissing them out of hand or giving up as soon as they encounter the least bit of resistance.

The choice of action offered in adventures outside the dungeon can prove paralyzing to some players. The dungeon provides a comfortingly obvious series of choices. One room leads to another. All you have to do to get some action going is bust in every door you see, knowing that eventually something big, angry, and ugly is going to come screaming after you. You face the same basic situations repeatedly and have equally standard responses ready. When you see a door, you know to listen for noises on the other side, then test it to see if it's locked or jammed. The thief picks the lock, or the fighter bashes down the door. Then you ready yourself for whatever is inside. Once you've beaten up any hostile inhabitants, you complete your search routine. After you've done that, you look for the next likely room.

The trick to investigative scenarios or other out-of-dungeon adventures is to look at their scenes and encounters as if they're rooms in a dungeon. You'll quickly see that your DM has really faced you with only a couple of simple choices. Once you've narrowed down your choices, you can proceed with the same speed and confidence you're used to exercising underground.

Think about investigative sequences in TV shows or movies. Virtually every scene provides a clue that leads the characters to the next scene. You can draw a diagram of clues: They lead into one another like chambers in a dungeon. You could even say that the investigators are trapped in one room (scene) until they find the clue they need. This clue unlocks the door to the next chamber. The process then repeats, with the investigators finding the clue that gets them to the next door, and so on.

In a real dungeon, you can see the walls of the room, and the key is a tangible item—a lever, a secret button, a successful Open Locks skill check, or whatever. In an investigative scene, the dungeon walls, the locked door, and the key are imaginary. You not only have to figure out how to get the key that unlocks the door—you have to be able to identify it once you've got it.

This, then, is the first step to successfully overcoming obstacles outside the dungeon: Look for the walls, the door, and the key. The walls are the factors stopping you from moving forward. The door is the clue or event that moves you to the next scene. The key is the method you use to get that clue or provoke the event.

Don't bother to stop and think about this if you already know what to do. But if you're stuck, or each member of the group wants to pursue a radically different course, this way of thinking should help you to see your way through the problem.

The Walls

When you don't know what to do next, the first thing to do is ask yourself why you're stuck. Together with the other players, make a list of the factors limiting your actions. These are the "walls" that constrain you, and they make the obstacle you face challenging. Actually

THE KEY

Adventures can also bog down when groups fail to realize that they've already overcome an obstacle and need to move on to the next one. Each scene typically provides you with only one clue or development that points you toward the next.

Let's go back to the dungeon comparison. Dave's problem in the introductory example is that he won't leave the room even after he's been handed the key. The librarian's role is to tell you that the book has been stolen. He might be able to provide you with supporting information for that fact, telling you what security measures the thief would have had to overcome, for example. But he's not going to advance you any further in the story. Now it's up to you to do some investigative work. Perhaps Dave was thrown by the fact that it isn't the NPC who's offering you resistance in this case. Dave is primed to batter down every NPC's resistance; when he encounters a helpful one, he suspects a hidden agenda. It is the absence of the book, not the librarian's desire to conceal information, that acts as the "wall" here. If Dave stopped and realized that, he'd let the scene end and go on to pursue the next clue.

In the example, that clue lies in another "dungeon chamber"—the encounter with the crazy drunkard. Unlike the librarian—but like most characters you'll encounter in the course of an investigation—he's not about to give up his "key" without some effort on your part. The wall he put up was his incoherence. Instead of finding a key to unlock the door, the group gave up. Many encounters allow for several possible keys. An attempt to sober him up would be one key. Patient listening to sift the sense from his babble would be another.

MAPPING AN INVESTIGATIVE SCENARIO

Another factor that keeps dungeon adventures on track is the map. If you get confused as to where you've been, or where you ought to go next, you have a nice diagram to look at. It reminds you of things you've forgotten—like that secret door you ignored when you heard the hideous scraping noise in the west hallway. When you hit a dead end, you can go back and pick up those loose ends.

So why not map investigative scenarios, too? In this case, you're not mapping a series of literal rooms, caverns, and corridors. You're making a diagram of scenes, as a reminder of the connections that brought you to your current predicament. For each scene successfully completed, list the wall, the door, and the key. Use arrows to show the connections between scenes. Pencil in other possible areas you haven't investigated yet, in case you find you have been fooled by a red herring and need to start over from a particular point. By jotting this down in diagram form, you can see at a glance where you've been and, possibly, where you ought to be headed. Instead of a confusing mass of competing possibilities, you see the adventure laid out before you in clear, easily digestible units that suggest a direction.

THINKING LIKE A DM

The resulting map looks oddly like something a DM might use to remind herself of the connections between scenes in the adventure she's planned. Coincidence? We don't think so! One of the best ways to make your way through a non-dungeon scenario is to stop and think about the adventure from the DM's point of view. To create an investigative adventure, she has to devise a mystery, and then a series of logical steps to lead you to its solution. Ideally, each of her scenes provides several ways to move forward. If a scene demands that one PC make a single roll during scene B before you can move to scene C, she's setting herself up for trouble. If the PC fails, the adventure stops dead, and there's no way to get it back on track.

Remember, then, that the DM has probably considered two or three possible solutions to each problem. She's also ready to permit any common-sense response you come up with to succeed, even if she didn't anticipate it. Knowing that there are so many different ways to prevail should give you confidence and allow you to try things without getting bogged down.

ACT. 4

REVIEW AND UPDATE YOUR BARRIERS.

MOVE ON TO THE NEXT OBSTACLE. 6

When at a loss for the next move, try to think what you'd do if you were the DM. What does her diagram of the adventure look like? Is your theory of the situation way more complicated than you'd ever find in a short story or comic book? If so, the real truth is probably simpler.

WRAPPING IT UP

Remember that the investigative scenario has a structure just as tight as a dungeon map's—if you know where to look for it. By visualizing that structure, by breaking down problems in a systematic way, and by diagramming your notes, you can identify, analyze, and overcome the obstacles. With a little thought and a touch of confidence, you'll pound through them as easily as you bash down dungeon doors.

By its very nature, a monster is meant to be intimidating, but some who battle monsters become jaded after a while. Encounters that should be nerve wracking lose their edge. When the sight of a monster no longer frightens your players, you need something more dangerous than a monster. . .

WHEN MONSTERS GANG UP ON YOU

TAG TEAM TERROR

by E.W. Morton • illustrated by Wayne Reynolds

. . . you need two monsters.

Monsters often find themselves working or living alongside different creatures. Sometimes those creatures are monsters whose abilities could complement their own. Those who want to be something more than a trophy on an adventurer's wall soon learn to cooperate, combining their powers with those of their neighbors. Here are twenty possible monster combinations that are sure to be a frightening challenge for your players.

1 WEREWOLF & RUST MONSTER

Lycanthropes are famous for their vulnerability to silver weapons, so it is unlikely that any group going up against such a creature will not have silver on hand. Unfortunately, lycanthropes are even more painfully aware of their vulnerability than those who hunt them, and they often take steps to deprive their foes of silver weapons.

A particularly clever werewolf might set up its lair in a cave inhabited by a rust monster. The two creatures could learn to tolerate one another, for the werewolf can use the rust monster as protection, and the rust monster can always rely on the werewolf to attract adventurers with tasty silver morsels. Whenever such a band arrives, the rust monster destroys their silver weapons while the werewolf concentrates on killing disarmed adventurers. Only after the party was slain would the rust monster turn its attention to non-silver items.

Together, a werewolf with a 1st-level commoner as a base and a rust monster make for an EL 5 encounter.

2 Grigs & Giant Bees

Most sprites are human-like in shape, if not in size, but the sprites known as grigs are as much insect as they are humanoid. Thus, it's not too surprising that grigs often ally with the insects that share their woodland homes. One of the more common associations between such creatures is that formed between a band of grigs and a swarm of giant bees.

While the giant bees are not intelligent enough to assist the grigs intentionally, the sprites often use them in ambushes. An angry band of grigs lures an offending party into an area frequented by giant bees, and the grig fiddler afflicts the party with *Otto's irresistible dance*. After a short while, the dancers undoubtedly attract the giant bees, which are immune to the compulsion produced by the grig fiddler. The giant bees finish off the helpless dancers, and the grigs avoid combat entirely.

Assuming a grig band with six members, one of them a fiddler, and a swarm of four giant bees, it would be an EL 6 encounter.

3 Harpy & Phantom Fungus

Harpies are notorious for their ability to lure listeners toward them with their songs. Usually, the harpy uses this power to captivate victims so that they are easier prey. But many harpies, while quick to defend their territories, tire of such physical involvement in the defense of their homes. Instead, they set traps and hazards into which they lure adventurers with their songs. Unfortunately for the harpy, an entranced adventurer who sees a hazard between him and the singing harpy is likely break free of her song.

Thus, some harpies choose to lair in caves inhabited by a phantom fungus. This fungal creature is immune to the harpy's song, and because it is naturally invisible, it can stand unseen between the harpy and a victim of her song. With any luck, the harpy can stay out of the fight entirely.

Such an encounter with a harpy and a phantom fungus would be an EL 6 encounter.

4 Grimlocks & Basilisk

Any creature gazing upon the eyes of a basilisk is turned to stone, but grimlocks, who have no eyes, are invulnerable to this danger. Thus, a gang of grimlocks might keep a basilisk as a pet; for while they do not truly understand gaze attacks, they are intelligent enough to realize that a basilisk can harm sighted creatures.

The basilisk pets of grimlocks might guard the grimlocks' lair or simply roam about the immediate area without direction. In any case, grimlocks are likely to come to their pets' aid in combat. The basilisk is not only helpful for such support, but it is also happy for the company, as it finds few creatures that are not turned to stone by its gaze.

An encounter with a gang of five grimlocks and a single basilisk pet has an Encounter Level of 7.

5 Treant & Dryad

Dryads are particularly vulnerable in that their life forces are tied to particular trees. The death of such a tree leads to the death of its dryad. Groves of dryads corresponding to particularly close-standing groves of trees often worry that their enemies could easily find and destroy all of them at once.

Fortunately for such dryad groves, the denizens of the forest often work together. Dryad groves frequently befriend a local treant, who comes to their assistance should their trees ever be threatened. While normally helpless, a dryad's tree can be animated by a treant just as can any other tree, allowing the tree to defend both itself and its dryad. The tree can also walk about in such a state, allowing its dryad to relocate, should the need arise.

An encounter with a grove of eight dryads protected by a treant has an Encounter Level of 9.

6 Ghasts & Yellow Mold

Undead creatures are among the most frightening monsters to be found. They are often capable of both inflicting and resisting serious injuries, and many are known for their frightening special abilities. Few hunters of the undead, however, are quick to realize the benefits afforded to the undead by their most basic traits. As an example, all undead are immune to poison. At a glance, this is no great benefit, until one considers a lair of ghasts that has become infested with a patch of yellow mold.

Though the poisonous spores of this mold are quick to kill most living creatures, the ghasts are immune. Ghasts can travel freely about their infested lair, while living foes must be wary of yellow mold spores, preventing them from taking full advantage of the lair's layout.

The yellow mold damages Constitution and the ghasts' special attacks require Fortitude saving throws, making this combination of threats particularly deadly. Some passages might simply be inaccessible, and entire rooms might be well-protected havens for the undead.

A band of six ghasts that shares its home with a patch of yellow mold is an EL 9 encounter.

7 Half-Fiend Wight & Spawn

Worse still than the undead is a monster that is both half-fiendish and undead, especially one as powerful as a half-fiend wight. A half-fiend wight is sufficiently powerful to use its fiendish nature to *desecrate* its lair, protecting itself and any spawn it creates from turning attempts.

Worse, in this *desecrated* lair, any spawn created by the fiendish wight or its prodigy gain bonus hit points as a result of the spell. Any spawn traveling with a fiendish wight was likely created within the confines of its desecrated lair, and these normal wights should thus have the relevant bonus hit points.

A half-fiend wight with three normal wights as spawn makes for an EL 8 encounter.

8 Will-o'-wisp & Shambling Mound

Will-o'-wisps are notoriously fond of leading travelers to their doom in dismal swamps, and they can be quite creative in their methods, preferring to combat foes indirectly with such things as traps and other monsters. One of the will-o'-wisp's favorite monsters to lead travelers to is the shambling mound, another creature that resides in the will-o'-wisp's swampy home.

A shambling mound used by a will-o'-wisp is usually unaware of or indifferent to the presence of the will-o'-wisp, and the monster attacks victims led to it by the will-o'-wisp because of territorial aggression. It neither knows nor cares that it is fighting these intruders by the will-o'-wisp's designs. In fact, given that a will-o'-wisp can become invisible, the travelers being

attacked by the shambling mound might be just as unaware of the will-o'-wisp's involvement. If the travelers facing the shambling mound do not detect the immediate presence of the will-o'-wisp, they are in dire straits. Each round that the victims do battle with the shambling mound, the invisible will-o'-wisp uses its electrical attack to boost the shambling mound's Constitution. The shambling mound stands to gain an average of 9 hit points per round due to the will-o'-wisp's assistance, an amount that might very well allow it to overcome a party that would otherwise have triumphed.

A will-o'-wisp assisting a shambling mound makes for an EL 8 encounter, though it might prove much more deadly than this number would suggest if some means of detecting and defeating the invisible will-o'-wisp is not expeditiously employed.

9 Chaos Beast & Assassin Vines

At first it sounds unusual that two such unrelated creatures might be encountered together, and it is quite true that the chaos beast and the assassin vine do little to directly complement each other. On the other hand, chaos beasts and monstrous plants such as the assassin vine are often found together for one reason and one reason alone: plants, with their inherent immunity to *polymorph* effects, are one of few types of creatures that a chaos beast cannot turn into another of its kind.

Chaos beasts and those monstrous plants that share their territory rarely develop tactics to assist one another in combat, mainly because neither is known for developing tactics. However, an assassin vine is quick to take advantage of victims of a chaos beast's corporeal instability, strangling them while their condition renders them helpless. This often stops the creation of new chaos beasts, inadvertently assisting the original beast by preventing a situation that is likely to attract unwanted attention. A chaos beast encountered alongside a pair of assassin vines is an EL 8 encounter.

10 Minotaurs & Gelatinous Cubes

Minotaurs are better able to navigate mazes and winding corridors than any other race, and thus they have no qualms about setting traps that can be avoided simply by leaving the most obvious path.

Gelatinous cubes make tempting guards for a minotaur lair. Because the cubes are transparent, it is possible for an adventurer not to notice one he is about to walk into, especially when running through a labyrinth. A minotaur with gelatinous cube guardians might strike quickly and then flee, hoping to attract pursuit. A well-positioned second minotaur stands on the other side of a gelatinous cube while the first escapes through a concealed side-passage. The idea is for the pursuers to mistake the second minotaur for the original, causing them to run straight into the waiting gelatinous cube.

A lair of three minotaurs guarded by four gelatinous cubes has an Encounter Level of 9.

11 Aboleth & Mind Flayers

Since the beginning of recorded history, the aboleths and the mind flayers have shared a close alliance of unknown origin. Even without this alliance taken into consideration, mind flayer inquisitions are greatly feared by most other races. When an assisting aboleth gets involved, this group of mind flayers can be even more dangerous. Both aboleths and mind flayers are in the business of magically enslaving victims, and the two monsters working in concert can be much more efficient. The creatures also afford one another a much greater range of movement. The mind flayers might provide travel assistance for an aboleth with their *plane shift* and *levitation* powers. The aboleth, in turn, might allow the mind flayers to hide their lair in unusual, oft-overlooked places by allowing them to breathe water. Add to this the fact that the aboleth and the mind flayers will be putting their vast intellects together in making their plans, and the truly frightening aspects of such an alliance become apparent.

It takes but a single aboleth and a trio of mind flayers to reach an Encounter Level of 11. Followers, such as an aboleth's skum or other enslaved creatures, combined with ingenious traps and strategies, will often make the encounter much more challenging.

12 Gargoyles & Gorgon

When not confronted with a greater threat to unite them, gargoyles and gorgons are not particularly fond of one another. Gargoyles, however, love to take up residence in gorgon territory, for the presence of gorgon-created statues gives them an excellent backdrop against which to hide. The local gorgon is not fond of such trespassing gargoyles, but it is largely

powerless to stop them. Its attacks are usually of no use, for gargoyles can simply take to the air to avoid them.

While gargoyles in gorgon territory spend much of their time hiding in lofty aeries to avoid being trampled, as soon as an intruder enters the gorgon's land, they are given slightly greater berth than normal. This allows them to set up ambushes amid the remnants of the gorgon's previously petrified victims. As long as the gorgon seems preoccupied with other interlopers, the gargoyles might even fight alongside it.

A pair of gargoyles and a gorgon fighting together make for an EL 9 encounter.

13 Succubus & Howlers

A succubus prides herself on her ability to tempt mortals, both with seductive offers and her spell-like compulsion effects. The succubus sees anything that improves her chances of manipulating a victim as an asset. Thus, many of these fiends travel with one or more howlers. In addition to serving as steeds, howlers can stalk their mistress's intended victims, using their supernatural howling to wear away their victim's resolve. After several hours of howling have deprived her victims of some of their Wisdom, the succubus makes her move.

A succubus with four howlers as pets makes for an EL 10 encounter.

14 Bebilith & Kuo-toa

The demons known as bebilith are known to attack other creatures on sight. Every once in a while, however, an unusually reasonable bebilith accepts an offer of service from a band of kuo-toas, usually at the request of their wicked goddess. Kuo-toas in the service of a bebilith usually view themselves as blessed individuals, much as would the guardians of a temple. The bebilith views its kuo-toa servants as watchdogs and shows them little loyalty beyond refraining from attacking them.

The bebilith tolerates the kuo-toa because they possess several features that allow them to assist the bebilith. Kuo-toa cannot become caught in a bebilith's webbing, allowing them a freedom of movement normally denied to other creatures in a bebilith's lair and giving them a significant advantage over intruders. Furthermore, kuo-tao are known for their keen vision, which lets them see beings that are normally hidden from sight and grants them the ability to see through figments. This makes them ideal at spotting and identifying threats.

An encounter with a bebilith and a half-dozen kuo-toa has an Encounter Level of 10. Optionally, one or more of the kuo-toa encountered might be a cleric, possibly making the encounter more challenging.

15 Lizardfolk Druid & Troll

The druid rulers of the lizardfolk are often satisfied with fellow members of their own race as bodyguards. However, some of the more chaotic or evil lizardfolk druids instead prefer a tougher guard in the form of a band of trolls. Trolls are preferred for their muscle, their regenerative abilities, and their intimidation factor. Trolls agree to serve lizardfolk druids because they have beneficial spells. Most of the time, though, such trolls serve out of fear.

A lizardfolk druid's list of available spells includes several magical means to make its troll guards much more intimidating. While its trolls are on the front line of combat, a lizardfolk druid can bolster their attacks with *magic fang* and *greater magic fang* while protecting them from fiery attacks with *protection from elements* and other, similar spells. High-level lizardfolk druids use *quench*, a good means of eliminating existing fire sources that are being used against trolls. Of course, a wise lizardfolk druid will also keep a few spells on hand to keep its trolls in line; feared spells such as *produce flame* and *flame strike*.

A lizardfolk druid of 7th level is needed to cast *flame strike,* one of the spells that best keeps allied trolls in line. An encounter with such a druid with a bodyguard of four trolls has an Encounter Level of 11.

16 Formians & Lamia

Lamias are well known for their tactic of sapping a victim's Wisdom and then taking control of him through magical means. Unfortunately, many formian conscription teams have also heard of this strategy and have found a means of putting lamias' tactics to use for them. Such a conscription team will have one of its members *dominate* a lamia, and will then direct the lamia to drain targets' Wisdom on their behalf.

This strategy is especially dangerous in the hands of the formians, for they can be much more liberal with a lamia's Wisdom-draining ability than the lamia. A lamia that drains a victim of too much Wisdom can easily *charm* him, but her new ally is often very foolish and inept. A formian taskmaster's *dominate* power, however, completely controls a creature's actions, and formian conscription teams actually prefer weak-willed victims that have little chance of resisting. Once they have dominated as many creatures as they can, they abandon the now-useless lamia and leave with their conscripts.

A conscription team of three formian taskmasters and a single *dominated* lamia is an EL 10 encounter. As the team *dominates* other creatures, it becomes increasingly difficult to combat, and depending upon the nature of those creatures, the Encounter Level could be much higher.

17 Vampire & Umber Hulk

On the surface this unusual alliance seems unlikely, but the result is mutually beneficial. The umber hulk has little desire to eat the long-dead flesh of a vampire, and the vampire has little to fear from the umber hulk's attacks. Working together, both monsters can attack much larger groups than either could alone, and the vampire can travel rapidly beneath the earth during the day by following, in *gaseous form,* closely behind the umber hulk. Both creatures are immune to one another's gaze attacks and thus use them liberally when confronting foes; the vampire *dominates* those foes that the umber hulk's confusing gaze has not affected. With luck, most of the victims kill one another, allowing the vampire to take the last weakened survivors, and leaving the dead for the umber hulk to feast upon.

A vampire and umber hulk team has an Encounter Level of 9.

18 Ghouls & Stirges

Ghouls often find it useful to lair near a flock of stirges. Immune to the stirges' blood drain ability, the ghouls get a few easy meals before the vicious flying creatures learn to avoid them. Thereafter the ghouls and stirges can exist side by side, each benefitting from the abilities of the other. When foes invade or are lured into the stirge lair, the ghouls use hit and run tactics, trying to paralyze as many foes as they can and then trick the rest of the invaders into chasing them. When the paralyzed foes are left behind, the stirges swoop in to drain blood from the helpless victims. The ghouls return after defeating or losing their pursuers and feast upon the body now drained of blood.

A flock of nine stirges and a group of six ghouls makes for an EL 9 encounter.

19 Red Dragon & Iron Golems

Dragons are among the most feared creatures that exist, particularly the older ones, and few would dare enter the lairs of such terrible beasts. While many dragons rely on this fact and their inherent talents to keep their hoards safe, dragons often have minions in place, helping it to defend its treasure.

A favorite choice of red dragons is the iron golem. Not only is an iron golem a sturdy and unquestionably loyal creature, but its nature makes it particularly advantageous to a creature that breathes fire. Since fiery attacks that would harm other creatures instead heal iron golems, a red dragon fighting beside its sentries can make them all but indestructible. Every time the dragon unleashes its fire upon the invaders of its lair, the flames serve to repair the iron golems. The dragon might even be able to keep the iron golems between itself and the intruders, ensuring that these sentries will ultimately wear down and defeat the opposition before they can attempt an attack upon the dragon.

A mature adult red dragon fighting alongside a pair of iron golem sentries makes for an EL 18 encounter.

20 Lich & Tarrasque

Outside of the dragons that might predate human history, no creature is more universally feared by heroes and nations alike than the marauding tarrasque. Nothing is more terrible than this heartless engine of destruction. Nothing, that is, except the necromancer that defeated it.

This mighty wizard tricked the tarrasque into devouring whole a trigger for a *trap the soul* spell, sealing the great beast inside a small gem. The necromancer then transformed himself into a lich, using the gem that holds the tarrasque as a phylactery. Now, all who oppose the lich's evil schemes are faced with a most unusual quandary. If they do not destroy the lich's phylactery, the lich is restored whenever he is slain—but, if they do destroy the phylactery, they unleash the tarrasque upon the land once more.

Fighting an 18th-level necromancer who becomes a lich and a tarrasque at the same time is an EL 22 encounter.

What's Your Killer Combo?

Which two monsters would you put together to give the players a double whammy?

Send us your tag-team suggestions, and we'll print the best ones for all DMs to use (and all players to fear). Use monsters from the *Monster Manual, Monsters of Faerûn,* the *Psionics Handbook, The Temple of Elemental Evil,* any of the recent D&D modules from Wizards of the Coast, or any issue of *Dragon Magazine* from #274 onward.

Email your entries to scalemail@wizards.com, or post a letter to:
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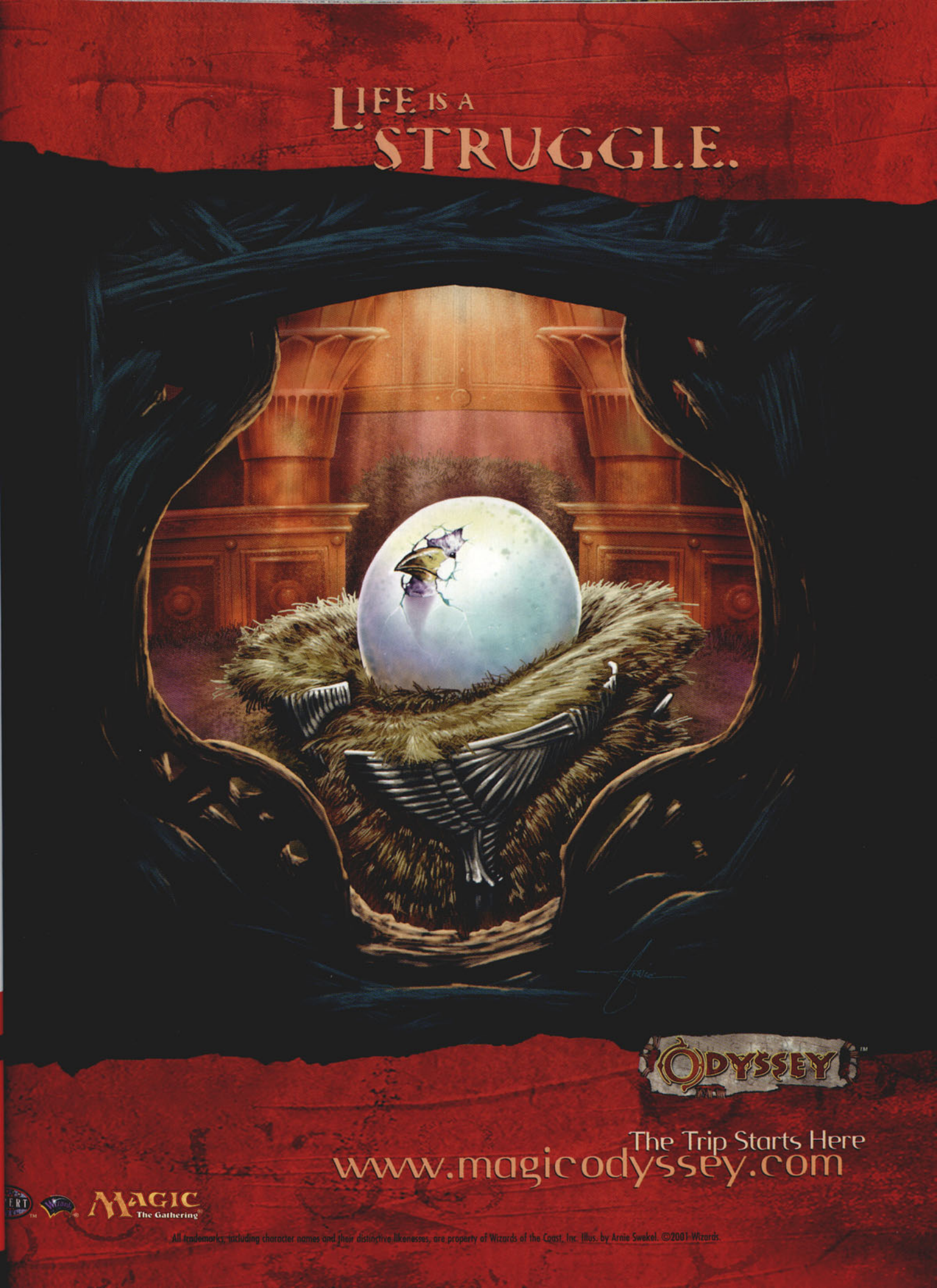
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Mind flayers

no. 28

by Mike Selinker

A deck of many things has been shuffled into the box below. Identify its 22 plaques by their effects, which have been sorted alphabetically by the plaques' names, with their word lengths in parentheses. Find the plaques by going from letter to letter one at a time, going horizontally, vertically, or diagonally in any direction. A letter can be used multiple times in a word, but never twice in succession. Each letter in the box will be used in at least one plaque.

	K	R	B	L	U	K	
E	U	E	Y	A	L	A	S
G	M	F	T	E	C	N	U
T	O	L	H	F	O	D	T
V	O	R	A	M	G	O	H
I	E	N	T	E	J	N	G
Z	D	H	S	R	U	I	K

Change alignment instantly. (7)
Defeat the next monster you meet to gain one level. (5)
You are imprisoned. (6)
-1 penalty to all saving throws henceforth. (7)
Enmity between you and an outsider. (6)
Lose 10,000 experience points and you must draw again. (4)
Gain your choice of twenty-five pieces of jewelry or fifty gems. (3)
Lose Intelligence (permanent drain). You may draw again. (5)
Gain 10,000 XP or two more draws from the deck. (6)
Gain a major magic weapon. (3)
Gain the service of a 4th-level fighter. (6)
You are granted 1d4 wishes. (4)
One of your friends turns against you. (5)
Immediately lose all wealth and real property. (4)
Defeat Death or be forever destroyed. (5)
Immediately gain a +2 inherent bonus to one ability. (4)
Gain beneficial medium wondrous item and 50,000 XP. (3)
All magic items you possess disappear permanently. (6)
Avoid any situation you choose . . . once. (8, 2 words)
Body functions, but soul is trapped elsewhere. (7, 2 words)
Gain 6 ranks in Diplomacy plus a small keep. (6)
Know the answer to your next dilemma. (6)

no. 27 SOLUTION

1. WAND OF CURE SERIOUS WOUNDS
2. MANUAL OF GAINFUL EXERCISE
3. ROBE OF USEFUL ITEMS
4. BOOTS, WINGED
5. ROD OF ALERTNESS
6. TOME OF LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE
7. MANTLE OF SPELL RESISTANCE
8. HELM OF BRILLIANCE
9. MASK OF THE SKULL
10. CANDLE OF TRUTH
11. TALISMAN OF THE SPHERE
12. SCROLL OF POLYMORPH OTHER
13. DIMENSIONAL SHACKLES
14. DUST OF APPEARANCE
15. STAFF OF HEALING
16. FIGURINES OF WONDROUS POWER (GOLDEN LIONS)

MIND BLAST

What *Dungeon Master's Guide* prestige class becomes another class when you remove a string of letters?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 64

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LIFE DRINKER

BY MONTE COOK • ILLUSTRATED BY CARLOS D' ANDA
FOR IDEA & DESIGN WORKS, LLC

Come, let me drink from the cup that is your life.
Let me take from thee all that is you.
I can make much better use of it than you ever could,
you simple, simple creature.

—The last words spoken to Erthanian by the vampire Cadmeus

Among the ranks of the undead, the vampires are some of the most feared creatures that stalk the night. Yet even those cursed with vampirism have those that they look upon with respect. They have many names, but most often they are called the lifedrinkers.

Lifedrinkers are vampires who have been undead for a very long time, honing their evil abilities to the fullest. They focus on their inherent ability to feed upon the living. Vampire wizards, sorcerers, or clerics make the best lifedrinkers, for the primary ability of the lifedrinker is to turn life energy and blood stolen from another being into magical power.

Like most vampires, lifedrinkers are likely to have a host of vampire spawn that serve them, charmed guardians, and other servants. They often keep a small prison of living beings to feed upon—their "cattle."

LIFEDRINKER — HIT DIE: D12

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+2	+2	Lifewell, invigorate
2	+1	+3	+3	+3	Empower blood spell
3	+2	+3	+3	+3	Heighten blood spell
4	+3	+4	+4	+4	Blood gift
5	+3	+4	+4	+4	Blood servant, night shroud
6	+4	+5	+5	+5	Maximize blood spell
7	+5	+5	+5	+5	Greater blood drain, night's boon
8	+6	+6	+6	+6	Quicken blood spell
9	+6	+6	+6	+6	Night's strength
10	+7	+7	+7	+7	Blood revel

Answer to Mind Blast: BLACKGUARD (BARD).

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the lifedrinker prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A vampire that takes a level of lifedrinker gains no new proficiency in weapons, armor, or shields.

Lifewell (Ex): Lifedrinkers store the life energy that they steal within themselves, in a reservoir called a lifewell. From this well, they draw the points needed to use their other powers. Points are gained from bestowing negative levels and draining Constitution. Each negative level given with the vampire's energy drain power grants two lifewell points. Each point of Constitution drained using the vampire's blood drain ability grants one lifewell point. Lifedrinkers must keep track of their total lifewell points. The lifewell of a lifedrinker can hold up to 3 points per class level. Points gained when the lifewell is full are wasted.

The lifedrinker can absorb only 3 lifewell points per class level between one sunrise and the next.

A lifedrinker with 0 lifewell points must make a Will saving throw (DC 20) or begin attacking any living creature within sight until the reservoir has at least 1 point per level of the lifedrinker. A successful saving throw means that the lifedrinker need not make a saving throw versus this blood madness until a week has passed (and only if, during that week, the lifewell has remained at 0 points). When a vampire attains its first lifedrinker level, it has 0 lifewell points and must immediately make the required saving throw.

Invigorate (Su): A lifedrinker can spend 1 lifewell point and gain 1d6 temporary hit points. These hit points last until the next sunrise and do not stack with other sources of temporary hit points. Hit points from multiple uses of the invigorate power do not stack with themselves. (See "Sage Advice" in this issue for a detailed explanation of how temporary hit points from different sources and multiple uses of the same source interact.)

No more points can be spent on this ability in any given day than the lifedrinker has levels.

Empower Blood Spell (Ex): If the lifedrinker casts spells, it may use 4 lifewell points to empower a spell as if using the feat, Empower Spell. The spell's level is not affected.

Heighten Blood Spell (Ex): If the lifedrinker casts spells, it may use a variable number of lifewell points to heighten a spell as if using the feat, Heighten Spell. For every 2 lifewell points devoted, the spell is treated as if one level higher for purposes of save DC and other effects. For example, if a lifedrinker uses 4 lifewell points to heighten a *fireball* spell, this spell is treated as a 5th-level spell when figuring its saving throw DC, and it can penetrate a *minor globe of invulnerability* (a 3rd-level *fireball* cannot). The spell's level is not affected.

Blood Gift (Ex): The lifedrinker can use 4 lifewell points to enhance its blood drain and children of the night special abilities. The lifedrinker must pay this cost when using the ability to be enhanced, and the bonus lasts for only one use of the ability.

A lifedrinker using this ability to enhance its blood drain ability multiplies the Constitution drain inflicted by 1.5.

When using this ability to enhance its children of the night ability, the lifedrinker summons 1.5 times the usual number of creatures.

Blood Servant (Sp): Using 10 lifewell points, the lifedrinker can call an outsider to serve it. This ability works just like the *lesser planar ally* spell; however, the lifedrinker can only call evil outsiders with this ability. The ally automatically serves the lifedrinker until the next sunrise, but no longer. A lifedrinker may only have one blood servant in existence at any one time.

Night Shroud (Ex): At 5th level, a lifedrinker can use 8 lifewell points to add +2 to its natural armor and turn resistance, add +10 to its cold and electricity resistance, and increase its damage reduction to 20/+2. These effects last until the next sunrise.

Maximize Blood Spell (Ex): If the lifedrinker casts spells, it may use 6 lifewell points to maximize a spell as if using the feat, Maximize Spell. The spell's level is not affected.

Greater Blood Drain (Ex): At 7th level, the lifedrinker's blood drain ability now drains 1d6 points of permanent Constitution loss.

Night's Boon (Ex): The lifedrinker can use 6 lifewell points to enhance its greater blood drain and children of the night special abilities. The lifedrinker must pay this cost when using the ability to be enhanced, and the bonus lasts for only one use of the ability.

A lifedrinker using this ability to enhance its greater blood drain ability inflicts 6 points of permanent Constitution drain.

When using this ability to enhance its children of the night ability, the lifedrinker summons the maximum number of creatures possible (32 rats, 100 bats, or 18 wolves).

Quicken Blood Spell (Ex): If the lifedrinker casts spells, it may use 8 lifewell points to quicken one of its spells, as if using the feat, Quicken Spell. The spell's level is not affected.

Night's Strength (Su): At 9th level, the lifedrinker can spend 3 lifewell points to temporarily increase its Strength by 2 points. This ability score increase lasts until the next sunrise.

Blood Revel (Su): Once a 10th-level lifedrinker drains any blood from a victim, it may enter a state called a blood revel in the round after draining blood from a victim and remain in that state for 10 rounds. In this state, the lifedrinker gains a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength, its damage resistance increases to 25/+3, its fast healing increases to 10 points per round, and it ignores its weakness toward garlic, mirrors, holy symbols, and running water as well as its vulnerability to sunlight. However, during the blood revel, the lifedrinker cannot flee from a living foe, and must attack physically every round (a *hasted* lifedrinker in a blood revel could use its extra partial action to cast a spell as long as it also made a melee attack that round). If the lifedrinker is unable to make a physical attack against a living foe (for example, if trapped inside an *Otiluke's resilient sphere*) the blood revel ends.

A blood revel ends when the lifedrinker decides it ends, when no living foes are within range, or when 10 rounds are over. For the purposes of a blood revel, foes within range are those that can be reached by a full attack, a move and an attack, or a charge. When the blood revel ends, the lifedrinker must reach its coffin home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. Once it reaches its coffin, it must remain inside for 1 hour.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a lifedrinker, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Alignment: Any evil.
Knowledge (arcana): 6 ranks.
Spellcraft: 6 ranks.
Special: Must have vampire template.

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

The lifedrinker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

CHA	DEX	INT	WIS
Bluff	Hide	Knowledge (arcana)	Listen
	Move Silently	Profession	Sense Motive
		Search	Spot
		Spellcraft	

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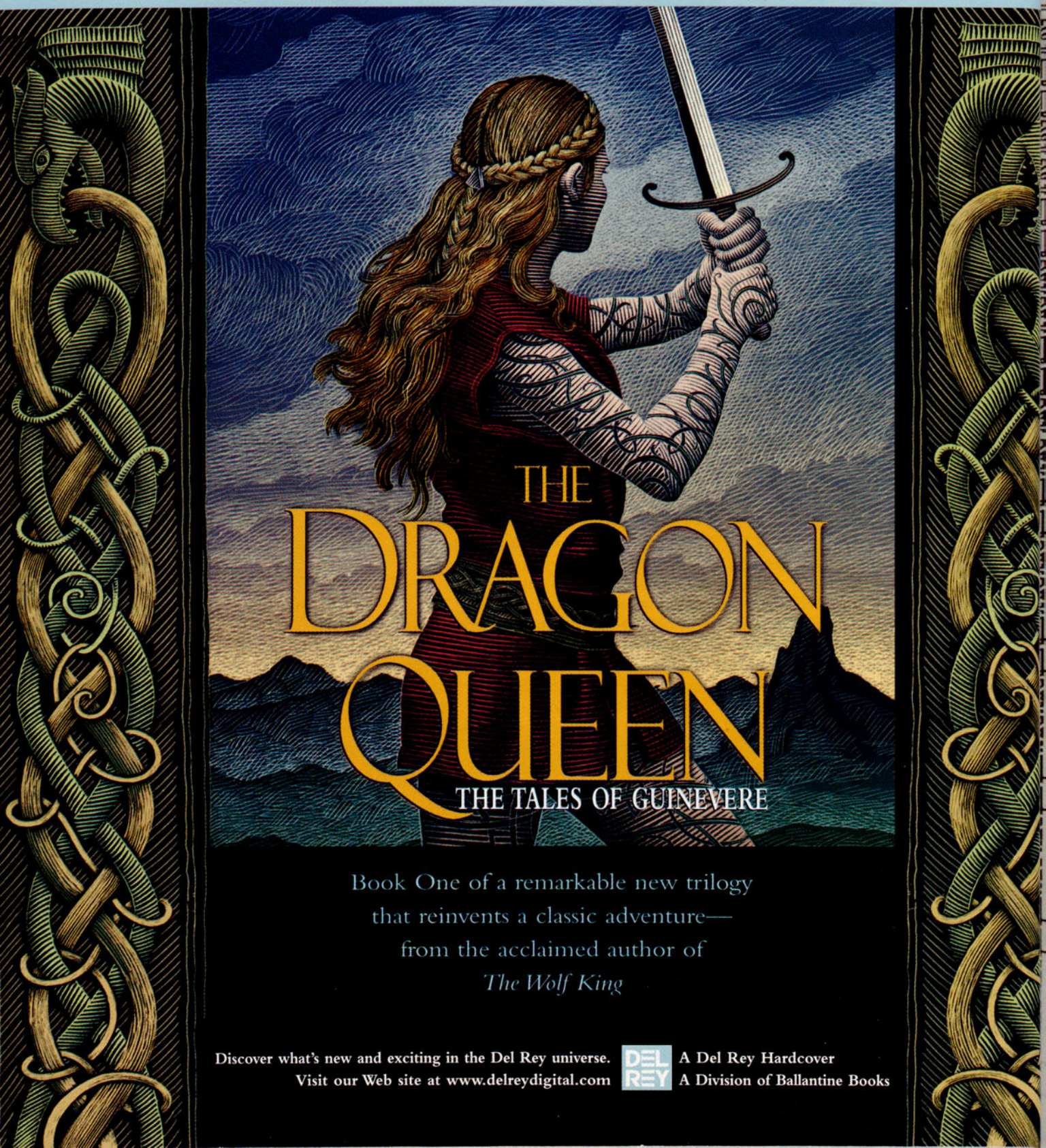
ALICE BORCHARDT



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BAGHDAD

BY KENNETH HITE · ILLUSTRATED BY D.T. STRAIN

Have you seen in all the length and breadth of the Earth,
A city such as Baghdad? Indeed, it is Paradise on Earth.
Life in Baghdad is pure; its wood becomes verdant.
While life outside it is without purity or freshness.

—Uma'arah ibn-Aqil, as quoted by Ahmad al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in his *History of Baghdad*

In the name of Allah the All-Powerful, the All-Compassionate, the All-Knowing: Know, O Prince, that there was once a city more beautiful, more prosperous, more populous, and more magnificent than any city before or since, saving only the Heavenly City. To its precincts and markets came horse-trainers from the Scythian plains, silk- and paper-makers from far Cathay, weavers and engineers from the empires of the Romans and Greeks, learned doctors from Egypt, painters from Persia, and dyers from Morocco. Spies sought out her secrets, and poets sought to capture her in rhyme and song, but none could truly know Baghdad, the Bride of All the World, who had not walked her bridges and meditated in her mosques. Here, the Rightly-Guided Caliph Harun al-Rashid extends to all his justice, wisdom, and mercy. Truly Baghdad was as the Caliph al-Mansur named her, Madinat-as-Salaam, the City of Peace. That is, until your heroes showed up.

HISTORY

The idol-worshipping Assyrians (and perhaps even more ancient peoples than that) occupied the site of Baghdad thousands of years ago. But when the Caliph al-Mansur arrived at this bend in the Tigris river in 762 A.D., there was nothing but a small Nestorian Christian monastery surrounded by dirt mounds and mud. Having just overthrown the previous Umayyad caliphs, al-Mansur had no wish to move his dynasty, the Abbasids, into the previous capital, Damascus. Therefore, he desired to build a new city, one worthy of the Arab people, and of the true religion of Islam, a city that would be the envy of the world. The site he chose was thirty miles from the fallen capital of the Persian Empire, Ctesiphon—a good location for trade, and a good source of building material for the new city. From the Persian words for "foundation of God," came the city's name "Baghdad," although al-Mansur officially named it Madinat-as-Salaam, the City of Peace. The city's Persian minority, oddly, refers to Baghdad as Zawra, from an Arabic word meaning "crooked." Whether this is from the bend of the Tigris, or from a feeling of resentment at having their ancient capital cannibalized to raise the walls of the City of Peace, few have the temerity to ask.

A hundred thousand workers and artisans from all corners of the Caliphate labored for twelve years to build the Round City; when they had finished, their work barracks became suburbs. As the suburbs grew, the workers ringed Baghdad with canals to irrigate the land and bring water to the citizenry. Over the next forty years, as the Abbasid Caliphate has grown stronger, richer, and more sophisticated, the population of Baghdad has swelled to six times its previous size. Only Ch'ang-an, the capital of the T'ang Chinese Emperor, can rival Baghdad in population, and only the glorious Byzantine capital Constantinople can approach it in beauty. As the Abbasids have defeated both the Chinese and the Byzantines repeatedly in battle, truly Baghdad is the greatest city in the world. Harun al-Rashid, the current Caliph, was born the year that the Round City was completed—some say that he and Baghdad are twins, both drinking from the same divine fountain of prosperity, fame, and wisdom.

BATHS

Al-Baghdadi's history of the City of Peace claims that it had 60,000 public baths at its height, which seems unlikely—although a figure of 60,000 baths, both public and private, is barely within the realm of the possible. The Arabs took and expanded the old Roman custom of the public bathhouse as a social center, meeting place, and recreation. Men and women use the same buildings, but at different times—only the largest bathhouses can accommodate both genders simultaneously with suitable Islamic modesty. The bathhouse, full of fragrant steam obscuring exits, burly slaves looming almost out of sight, (hopefully) trustworthy barbers stropping keen razors, and one's most dangerous rivals—all at the same time—makes a great place to dodge (or hire) an assassin. Getting your game off to a good Baghdad start can be as easy as saying, "You all meet in the baths."

LOCATIONS

PALACE of the GILDED GATE
In the center of the Round City is the official palace of the Caliphs, built by al-Mansur. Now primarily used for official government business, it still holds immense treasures, fantastic paradise gardens, and a warren of secret chambers. A bronze horseman surmounts the immense Green Dome 120 feet above the palace, glinting in the desert sun and visible for miles. Wherever the horseman's lance points each morning, in that direction lies the gravest threat to the security of the realm.

BOOKSELLERS' MARKET
(Souk al-Warrakin)
Stretching alongside the Basra Gate road out to the Harrani Gate, broken only by the Sarrat Canal, over one hundred booksellers' stalls jam this district. Here, the intellectually curious (or gullible) can find everything from learned commentaries on the Koran to magical scrolls to compendia of lore to maps of faraway islands and Baghdad back alleys alike.

KAZIMAYN CEMETERY
This immense necropolis is actually an archipelago of cemeteries running along the northwestern quarter of Baghdad outside the Tahiri Canal. Tombs of brilliant imams, desert prophets, and famous wizards alike dot the area. Moslem law declares cemeteries unclean; the only people who go here are blasphemous grave-robbers, pious pilgrims desperate for religious insight, and necromancers willing to dicker with the cemetery's powerful families of ghouls.

HOUSE of the GREEKS (Dar ar-Rum)
This network of churches and monasteries on the southeast edge of Shammasiyya comprises the center of the Christian Quarter of Baghdad. The Nestorian Patriarch serves as the head of the Christian community here, much to the disgust of the Orthodox Byzantine ambassadors, who stay in one of the palaces near the East Khurasan Gate. Although the Nestorians remain staunchly loyal to the Caliph, many other Christian sects would gladly conspire with the Byzantines for Christ or gold or both.

PALACE of JA'AFAR
Harun's vizier and boon companion Ja'afar built an immense compound even more luxurious than the Khuld or Gilded Gate palaces, on the east bank of the Tigris opposite the lower harbor. Ja'afar says that he built it across the river to remove his roistering from the eyes of abstemious courtiers. However, jealous whispers hint that the Barmaki plan to use Jafar's palace to block the river traffic and seize the city, or that Ja'afar practices vile rituals (or makes love to the Caliph's daughter) somewhere in this lush pleasure-dome.

MOSQUE of BARATHA
This shrine, where the Caliph Ali halted and prayed 150 years ago, boasts healing hot springs and heated Shi'a preaching. It sits on the western edge of the city, where the Karkhaya and Isa Canals meet. Orthodox Sunni Moslems look askance on Baratha's traffic in pilgrims, especially those from rebel provinces in the north. The actual mosque is built in a jumble of styles, and ascetic Shi'a monks live in reed cabins along the canal side.

LOCAL HEROES

In the entire world, there has not been a city which could compare with Baghdad in size and splendor, or in the number of scholars and great personages. The distinction of the nobles and general populace serves to distinguish Baghdad from other cities . . .

—Ahmad al-Khatib al-Baghdadi,
History of Baghdad

AHMAD IBN-HANBAL
(born 780 A.D.)
4th-level Cleric/
2nd-level Expert
This young itinerant scholar has contacts in mosques all across the Arab world. He continues to seek out hadiths of the Prophet, the better to defend the inerrant and eternal words of the holy Koran.

BASHIR IBN AL-MUTAMIR
(born 760? A.D.)
6th-level Cleric/
1st-level Loremaster
The leader of the Mutazili school, which seeks to reconcile Greek philosophy with Islam; more conservative preachers see al-Mutamir as a dangerous theorist.

FADL IBN AL-RABI
(born 770? A.D.)
1st-level Aristocrat/
5th-level Rogue
From a wealthy merchant background, the Chamberlain of the Round Palace controls access to the Caliph. As an ambitious opponent of Ja'afar, he works with Ja'afar's rival, the Queen Zubeida.

HARUN AL-RASHID
(born 764 A.D.)
10th-level Aristocrat/
5th-level Cleric
"Harun the Rightly-Guided" rules the world of Islam from Tunis to Turkestan. A gifted diplomat and lover of pleasure, he allows all scholars, priests, and merchants to operate freely in his glorious capital. His favorite wife, Zubeida, works hard to advance her son, Muhammad, to the succession, and to reduce the power of the Barmaki family.

CITY LAYOUT

I mention Baghdad first because it is the center of Iraq, the greatest city, which has no peer in the east or the west of the world in extent, size, prosperity, abundance of water, or health of climate, and because it is inhabited by all kinds of people, town-dwellers and country-dwellers. To it they come from all countries, far and near, and people from every side have preferred Baghdad to their own homelands . . . In it there is gathered that which does not exist in any other city in the world . . . It is as if all the good things of the world are sent there, all the treasures of the earth assembled there, and all the blessings of creation perfected there.

—Yaqub ibn-Abdallah Yaqut,
The Book of the Nations

At the center of Baghdad's 30 square miles of shops, mosques, bazaars (or souks), baths, palaces, hovels, and inns rises the Round City of al-Mansur. Two 50-foot thick walls (of 60 and 90 feet high) encircle a vast complex of government facilities, quarters for the rich and favored, and storehouses over a mile and a half across. In the center of the Round City is the Palace of the Gilded Gate, and the Great Mosque of al-Mansur. None may enter the Round City except on foot; all horses, mules, and vehicles are banned—slaves carry in food, and teak aqueducts bring in water. Four gateways, each guarded by an immense domed fortress, allow access to the Round City through Iron Gates forged by the djinn under the command of Sulayman ibn-Daud over 1,700 years ago. Outside these gates sprawl the immense suburbs of Baghdad.

The Basra Gate, on the southeast, opens onto the Sharqiyya quarter of vineyards and gardens. The Great Sharqiyya Mosque overlooks the fruit market that marks the inland end of the lower harbor, where the mighty barges plow along the Tigris to and from the deepwater port of Basra. Warehouses hold cargoes from all over the world. The pitch-burners work here, brewing naphtha and paving-tar. Harbor breezes carry the smell away from the city. Along the southern edge of the Round City, between the Basra Gate and the Kufa Gate, is the immense market district known as the Karkh. The streets here range from tile-paved precincts of gold and silversmiths (which can be closed off with mahogany gates by night for safety), to the crushed-brick roads around the immense barley-mills that feed the city, to the muddy stretches of the Fief of Dogs where the poorest and most desperate live on the southeastern fringe of the city. Here, Sufi mystics preach amid choking clouds of the alkali dust used to kill the stenches in cleaner parts of the city.

Between the Kufa Gate on the southwest and the Damascus Gate on the northwest, the Attabiyya quarter stretches westward. The immense Damascus Gate Prison looms over the north side of the quarter, but the rich Four Markets district hosts the silk and papermaking guilds, who took their expertise from Chinese prisoners captured in Central Asia. Daring traders also come here from China, to sell their wares on the Porcelain Bridge over the Sarat Canal. On the border between the Attabiyya and Karkh districts, Harun al-Rashid has founded Baghdad's first hospital, where learned doctors and alchemists can study the healing arts.

Around the north rim of the Round City, between the Damascus Gate and the Khurasan Gate, the residential Harbiyya quarter stretches north along the Tigris. At its upper extremity, where the Tahiri Canal meets the river, is the upper harbor, where some cargo barges and both pleasure and fishing boats find a home. This is also the largest slave market in Baghdad and the Persian district. The Khurasan Gate itself opens onto the grounds of the Khuld Palace, the current residence of the Caliph. Here, artificial waterfalls, mechanical birds, and statues carved from solid gemstones decorate a true paradise on earth for the benefit of the Rightly-Guided Protector of the Sacred Places. Between the Khuld Palace and the Palace of the Prefect of Police lie the Caliph's stables, which contain horses, camels, and more exotic mounts from every corner of the world.

Three pontoon "bridges of boats" cross the Tigris; the Upper Bridge at the upper harbor, the Main Bridge at the Khuld Palace, and the Lower Bridge at the north end of the Sharqiyya quarter. The Lower Bridge leads to the vast Tuesday Market (Souk ath-Thalatha), which feeds the entire Rusafa quarter on the east bank of the Tigris. Along the

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JA'AFAR AL-BARMAKI
(born 767 A.D.)
6th-level Aristocrat/
1st-level Fighter/
2nd-level Rogue
Scion of the influential Persian Barmaki clan, Ja'afar serves Harun as Vizier, boon companion, and trusted adviser. His father, Yahya al-Barmaki, is the true power behind the throne. Court gossip whispers that, despite their overt faith, the Barmaki remain Zoroastrian fire-worshippers in secret.

JABIR IBN-HAYYAN
(born 721 A.D.)
12th-level Wizard/
4th-level Loremaster
Court physician, alchemist, and sage with a reputation stretching from antique India to barbarian Europe. Jabir's prodigious knowledge of ancient texts, and his incredible talents for alchemy and magic might bear fruit in a new and sorcerous Golden Age for Baghdad.

MAARUF KARKHI
(born 750? A.D.)
6th-level Sorcerer/
3rd-level Monk/
2nd-level Loremaster
This ascetic teacher also serves as a qadi, or judge, despite being of the mystical Sufi sect. His disciples, the Builders, have spread Sufi secrets throughout the Abbasid empire.

"ABU NUWAS"
(born 750? A.D.)
4th-level Bard
His nickname refers to his luxurious head of hair; born Hasan ibn-Hani, "Abu Nuwas" remains a favorite courtier of Harun. His exquisite lyric poetry celebrates wine, luxury, and extravagant living.

AL-SINDI IBN-SHAHAK
(born 750? A.D.)
7th-level Paladin
The stern and incorruptible prefect of Baghdad police. He considers it his job to remove problems from the Caliph's sight before they appear, and he objects to Harun's habit of sneaking into the city at night dressed as a common merchant.

Note: All characters are presented as of 800 A.D.

river north of the market the palaces and marinas of rich nobles and merchants splay in luxury; the owners frequent the Horse Market across the Mukharrim district, on the east edge of the city. The Hay Market, logically enough, lies between. On the north edge of the Mukharrim, the Thirst Market (Souk al-Atash) and the Gate of the Archway (Bab at-Taq) separate Mukharrim from the Shammasiyya, a mainly Christian (and hence wine-drinking) district that runs along the northeast side of the Rusafa quarter. Between Shammasiyya and the river, the great Rusafa Mosque and the palace of the old Caliph al-Mahdi (Harun's father) demarcate the Rusafa Maidan (or square), where merchants display luxury goods for the wealthy elites. The tombs of the Caliphs separate Rusafa proper from Shammasiyya.

ADVENTURES in BAGHDAD

Caliph Harun al-Rashid had gone forth from the palace, as was his wont now and then, to solace himself in the city that night, and to see and hear what new thing was stirring. He was in merchant's gear, and he was attended by Ja'afar, his Wazir, and by Masrur, his Sworder of Vengeance.

—**Richard Burton (trans.),**
The Thousand Nights and a Night

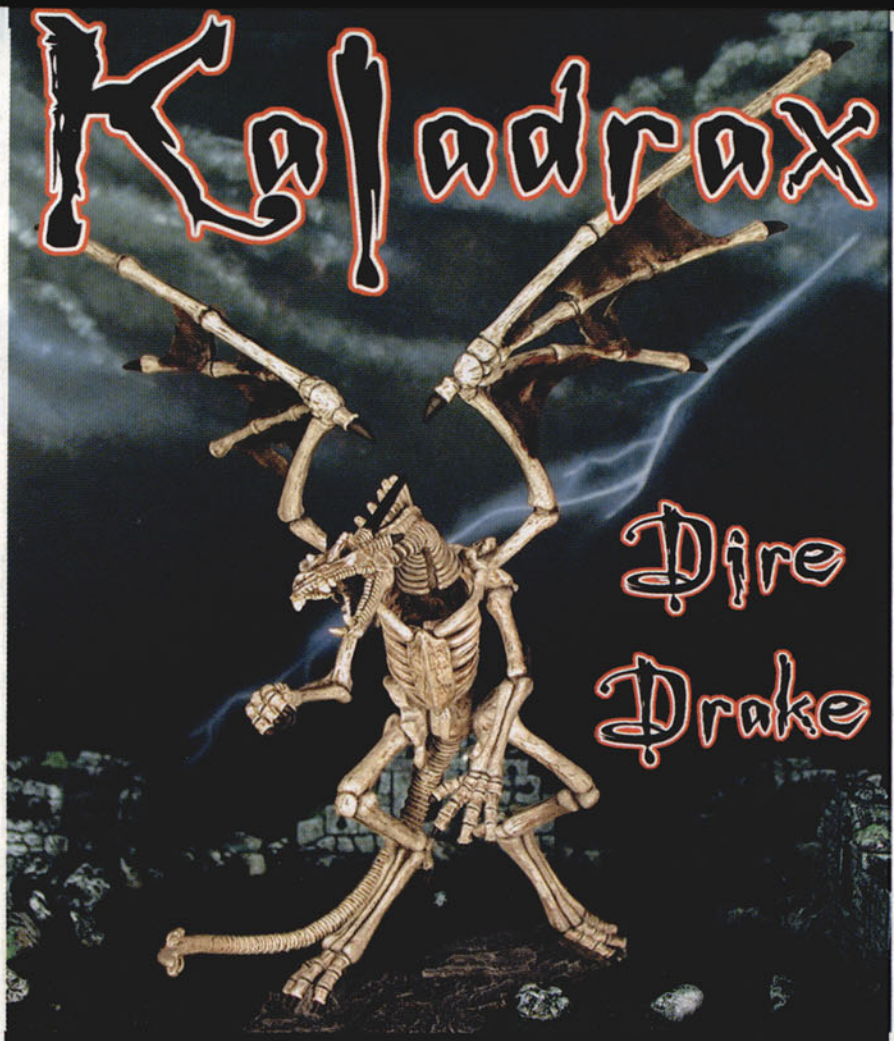
In the souks and bazaars, storytellers seek to captivate passersby with lurid tales of romance and danger, many of which remain temptingly unresolved. Fabulous jewels, magical artifacts from the time of the great Sulayman ibn-Daud, and tests that puissant strangers may perform to win the Caliph's favor—all of these adventure hooks rise into the spiced air of Baghdad, waiting for heroes. Herewith, a smattering of further beginnings; these few unworthy seeds should soon swell into pearls of adventure set in a Baghdad suitable for at least a thousand and one nights of gaming.

Harun al-Rashid has ordered the collection of original Greek manuscripts, and other scrolls containing ancient lore, for a new "House of Wisdom" to be constructed near the Khuld Palace. To encourage contributions, he has offered a rich reward for any manuscripts turned in—no questions asked. The heroes can chase down rumors in the Bookseller's Market, steal priceless codices from the Dar-ar-Rum, or mug less mighty heroes in the back alleys.

Sindbad the Sailor keeps a sumptuous villa in the Sharqiyya quarter, stocked with rich cargoes from his voyages to far islands. He's always eager to hear news of foreign lands and hire adventurers in a hurry to leave town. Once he leaves town, of course, his villa might be a tempting target for unscrupulous rogues who don't mind risking brass golems and animated skeletons to obtain the golden treasures of Sindbad.

A thousand shops jam the Fief of Rabi, between the Oil-Sellers' Square and the Coppersmiths' Gate on the west end of Karkh. Somewhere in that labyrinth, rumor says that a dusty shop sells an efreeti lamp, one that opens into the City of Brass. Now, a number of similar lamps have begun to appear all over the Fief, and the back alleys grow increasingly hot and shimmer metallically. Are the efreeti attempting to colonize the Fief—or Baghdad itself?

Along the Musa Canal, on the east side of Mukharrim, the Wild Beast Park holds amazing beasts (and some foreigners) from all corners of the world—manticores from India, dinosaurs from deepest Africa, wyverns from barbarian Europe, and bizarre beasts created in sorcerers' laboratories here in Baghdad. The Caliph pays well for animals he's never seen before—and certain alchemists pay even better for the blood of some of the Caliph's prize specimens.



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THE MOONWYVERN

Inns are vital in the Sword Coast North. Civilization is meager and wide-scattered, the weather is harsh, and the predators are harsher. Here, a known refuge often means the difference between life and death. Yet inns are themselves immobile targets, and tend not to last long. Many stretches of road sport the scattered, fire-scarred stones of a vanished hostelry. Often, these ruins become the home of some fearsome beast using the crumbling, overgrown cellar as a lair.

One roadhouse that has thus far defied the odds is the Moonwyvern Inn. It's a ramshackle roadhouse on the road between Silverymoon and Everlund, within an easy day's ride of the Moonbridge. It stands in the forest without benefit of neighboring farms or settlements and has offered shelter to travelers for some sixty years.

Who built and first ran the Moonwyvern is forgotten, but the present staff remembers that the place was named for a long-since-slain local wyvern often seen silhouetted against the moon.

The Moonwyvern is an dimly-lit place of rambling floors, stout pillars, and thick crossbeams. Those who expect fawning servants or cleanliness should go elsewhere. The worn-down but cozy atmosphere in the Moonwyvern is the pride of the Moonwyvern's staff and regular patrons.

Many folk in Silverymoon and Everlund have heard the Moonwyvern described as a place of plots and secret meetings. But seasoned travelers know that it's not the roaring place it once was. Some gossips credit the decline in scandalous activity to the current owner, and rumors that she is a harper abound.

The layout of the Moonwyvern changes often, as rotten parts collapse and demand replacement.

Clarshee Taraghe is "the ugly old woman who owns and runs the place." She's not a Harper although she sympathizes with many of their aims. She does follow a policy of keeping everyone's secrets, aiding those she likes, nursing the sick for days or even months, extending credit to the needy, and providing help to the desperate. Many patrons—even ruthless, brutal folk—love her like the mothers they once had and rush to her aid and defense if need be.

Not that Clarshee often needs such help. She stumps around her inn grumbling out constant mutterings of complaint spiced with colorful oaths like, "By the blasted blue danglepipe of Longjaws the dragon!" or "Cesspits of Waterdeep!" Despite her aging appearance, Clarshee is fearless and quite competent with axe, sledgehammer, pie-knife, or tar-brush. She runs the inn with the aid of Horokh and

HIDDEN MESSAGES

Each room in the inn is a potential repository for some forgotten note or message. There is a 30% chance that a room contains some hidden message. Finding a message requires a Search check (DC 30). To determine the content of written messages found in the inn, choose or roll **1d8** on this table (when a duplicate result turns up, substitute a variant of Message 1 or a DM's special):

1. "Meet at the usual place at moonrise, battle-ready. He's dead, but what we seek is missing."
2. "Tell the courtier with the long side-whiskers but no beard that Thauber seeks to buy more wine. The price he gives will be the room number. Go after dark, on the night after the day you get the courtier's answer. Weapons aren't allowed, but they can do nothing about spells or things of wood or strangle-cords carried concealed. Beware the tall one, who can change shape into a winged beast with claws and fangs. Their supply seems endless, but all who've tried to follow and learn whence it comes have been slain."
3. "Look for Maelra 'Moneyfingers' at The Blue Door, or Lassalan the Bowman at Gulorma's Roost of Gargoyles. Maelra's short, black hair, clever tongue, usually wears blue, corner table; Lassalan's tall, thin, usually plays at darts, and is missing the tips of the last two fingers on his right hand. They know who to send you to—but it'll be the wrong place unless you make sure to mention 'the black birds who tear up our gardens.'"
4. "Three magic rings and a sword that spits lightning—its commands and other powers we don't yet know. Hidden in the usual place, but the fourth statue this time."
5. "Down a broken drainpipe on Sanger Street, third door down from the cobbler's shop. The place is watched."
6. "Her name is Aladorna, she owes me 3,000 gold, and the knife she wears in her bodice is poisoned with something that paralyzes. Look for the house with the white turret, and tell the guard that you've come for the 'wheel that needs fixing.' Don't try to go back out the way he'll let you in unless you like wearing crossbow bolts in your back."
7. "Blackbrows is the one. Beware: he has the magic already, and knows how to use it."
8. "Tansin and Gulder can show you where. The dragon must be dead by now. There's one trap on the well, but below it, the rest is filled up with gold."

BY ED GREENWOOD
ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID DAY

INN

Beelbraeth, two monstrous athachs. (The athachs are lawful neutral, intensely loyal to Clarshee, speak Common, love to cook exotic foods, and sport long, shaggy fur and three horns.)

Clarshee also has at least one shield guardian in a closet that she can call on if guests get out of hand—and some means of calling on a friendly wizard to fight for her or protect the Moonwyvern.

The Moonwyvern itself is protected by flickering, sometimes-failing wards that protect it against fire (the structure is protected as if by an *endure elements (fire)* spell) and prying (*clairaudience/clairvoyance, scry*, and similar magic cannot penetrate the building).

Unscrupulous folk of all sorts use the Moonwyvern for meetings, hirings, and business not tolerated in Silverymoon or other settlements of the Silver Marches. As a result, the inn hides six decades worth of maps, messages, and items.

Its kitchens produce good, hearty fare—notably lovely fiddlehead soup and fried mushrooms (in season), roast venison, and fernwort bread.

The Moonwyvern sports at least one hidden room where guests can hide, a crawl-tunnel to the stables, and three tunnels to the nearby forest. The inn has two deep, clear wells in its cellars and a chest in which Clarshee keeps 14 crawling claws (see *Monsters of Faerûn*) that she can unleash to fight for her if need be. She often uses them to hunt down vermin in the inn. These claws hate pickling-juice, and Clarshee can 'herd' them by splashing it, when it comes time to return them to their chest.

CLARSHEE TARAGHE

Female human Sor8; CR8; Medium-size humanoid; HD 8d4+16; hp 36; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, *+1 ring of protection*); Atk +6 melee (1d4+2/19-20, *+2 dagger*), or +8 ranged (1d4+2/19-20 *+2 dagger*), or +7 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SA Spells; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16. Height: 5'3".

Skills and Feats

Concentration +15, Hide +9, Knowledge (local) +7, Spellcraft +10; Combat Casting, Run, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Spellcraft).

Possessions

light crossbow with 20 bolts, *+2 dagger*, 3 *potions of cure light wounds* and 2 *potions of cure critical wounds*, *+1 ring of protection.*

Spells Known (6/7/7/6/3)

0—*daze, detect magic, detect poison, light, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic*
1st—*color spray, mage armor, magic missile, spider climb, unseen servant*
2nd—*arcane lock, darkvision, detect thoughts*
3rd—*dispel magic, hold person*
4th—*wall of ice*

FOUND ITEMS

Strange items abound in the Moonwyvern. Players have a 20% chance to find a hidden item every time they succeed at a DC 25 Search check. Possible hidden items include:

- Dagger with sheath and belt.
- Length of dark waxed cord (masterwork quality), affixed to grappling hook; cord length d12x10 feet
- Written message (create one or refer to "Found Messages" sidebar)
- Set of lockpicks in dark cloth carry-roll with many straps and buckles (for wearing around legs or arms under clothing)
- Spell scroll containing a single 1st-level spell of the DM's choice.
- Leather purse or wooden coffer containing 2d8 gp, 3d6 sp, 3d4 cp, plus a key, ring (plain), and a merchant's claim-token.
- Ring of keys
- Map to treasure or a meeting-place. The map is crude with a simple 'follow the lines' route plus warnings like "falling-blade trap, use pole," "key under sixth skeleton," "third step lifts up, door release lever under it."

HIDING PLACES

Interesting items are hidden throughout the inn. Possible hiding places include:

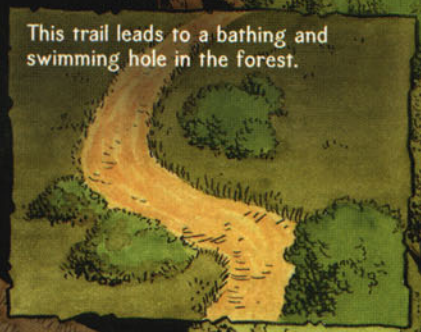
- Hollow chair legs, above-bed canopies, or other pieces of furniture.
- Floorboards pull up to reveal storage below.
- Lintels above doors pull out to reveal hidden nooks.
- Ceiling-panels lift up into a cavity above and can be slid sideways.
- Concealed doors offer access to long, narrow storage niches.
- Door frames are hinged to swing open, offering ready access to stacked pull-out 'drawers' inside the wall.
- The trim above a door slides off to reveal thin hollows inside the door's top.
- Window-sills lift out to reveal storage cavities beneath.

All the chimneys sport upward-pointing sharp metal spikes to discourage beasts.
The shutters can be barred from within at the top and bottom (every room has a spare bar) to keep out beasts.
Clarshee's homemade candles smell of blackberries; unexpectedly sweet, but pleasant.
Rainwater is collected for all washing tasks.
DAY.

THE MOONWYVERN INN

There are water buckets to quench fires in every room. Crushed mint and parsley keep the water smelling fresh.

This trail leads to a bathing and swimming hole in the forest.



ELMINSTER'S NOTES:

A nice den of rogues, to be sure. I felt right at home.

Many times down the years I've enjoyed the Moonwyvern's comforts. Smugglers and thieves looking to lighten themselves of something too hot to be fenced elsewhere have always gathered there—and all too often I've felt a pressing need to do business with them, before what they've liberated is used to plunge half of Faerûn into cataclysm, or start a major war, or set wild magic to raging like storm-fire across the North.

They come because they're made welcome, aye, and because of where the inn stands—but they also come, know ye, because those who can part with 75 gold coins a head (more, usually 100 at least, if they're lugging along the whole or parts of a monster, alive or dead, or someone they've kidnapped or murdered) will be allowed access to a portal hidden inside a certain closet. Touch its back wall and thy next step will be on a hilltop nigh the Sea of Swords, just northwest of Leilon.

One other thing: the magic that foils scrying is a combination of three spells better left mysterious. It clings to certain hand-sized focal stones hidden in many places around the inn, and it's possible to gain such protection for a few days (ere it fades utterly) by carrying such stones off. Best do so only in the most dire of emergencies, for if she catches ye at it, Clarshee will exact a high price in either coins, or belongings, or some handy part of thy anatomy.

I've always liked the Moonwyvern, but watch thy step. Old secrets are everywhere, and some guests are swift to react to anyone showing too much interest in another's business.

BAZAAR of the BIZARRE

VAMPIRE TOOLBOX

BY JOSEPH R. TERRAZZINO · ILLUSTRATED BY ARNIE SWEKEL

Dear Friends,
In the unceasing battle between good and evil, it is encouraging to find that history has nearly always played out in the favor of those righteous souls who stood their ground and faced unhallowed forces unflinchingly.

Before you today, I present a brief summary of a report I received from a fellow who hails from the Great Library of Hikkadia. He tells me that the miraculous items within his paper are indeed extant. Alas, their precise crafting methods are lost to time. Still, I am confident our arcane brothers in arms—those serving under the Arch Wizard, Maggus D. Templeton—will divine the secrets that rest at the core of these items. Rest assured I've dispatched explorers to unearth these objects for our cause. In time they will be ours, and in further time, they will be standard issue!

If you've questions regarding the items within my synopsis, send word to Lord Belnifant. He'll answer all that he can, for I am off to do battle once again with Lord Virmiklar. The troublesome vampire knows not when to quit, as they say! You'll read more of this bloodsucking wretch below.

For Love and Honor,
Sir Brakkus of Gelnne
Order of Malteth Wood

THE DEITUS DAGGERS

The wizard Malgus Vikranne once traversed the world hunting vampires. One evening he approached the outskirts of a village tormented by the blood-sucking undead. An adolescent vampire leapt at Vikranne from the bough of a tree. The experienced slayer thrust his sharpened staff through the undead boy, beheaded him, and cremated the corpse.

Townsfolk came upon him then, accusing him of taking their loved ones away in the night and killing them. They would not hear his protests that he was a slayer of vampires come to aid them. The villagers bound Vikranne and dragged him to the gallows, where a priest by the name of Helmnor Deitus officially accused him and began the execution ceremony.

Ironically, it was to Vikranne's advantage that, at the moment of prayer for his soul, a horde of vampires emerged from the shadows of night, flooded into the streets, and began slaughtering the gathered townsfolk. Deitus removed the noose from Vikranne's neck at the wizard's desperate urging, and the two fought shoulder to shoulder against the undead intruders.

The battle did not go well for the villagers, for most of their enemies were undead mockeries of their former kin. Frozen in dread, they refused to kill their own. Deitus and Vikranne gathered as many villagers as they could and retreated into the sanctuary of the church. There, as the screams of loved ones echoed from the streets, Deitus shouted a prayer toward the heavens, invoking Pelor, his god. Pleading for a miracle, the others joined him, weeping their prayers. The intensity of Deitus' earnest prayer prodded even Malgus Vikranne to join the petition.

Pelor heard the cries of his faithful. The church shook as if in an earthquake, and the candles on the altars flickered to life. The nave grew bright with sunshine as Pelor's avatar appeared before them, clad in golden armor and bearing gifts: two daggers with wide curved blades, serrated edges, guards forged to look like outstretched dragon wings, and a golden pommel made in the image of a skull engulfed in sunshine. Pelor explained the daggers' uses and handed the first to Deitus, the second to Vikranne.

Daggers in hand, the priest and the wizard followed Pelor into the streets. Together they vanquished a vampire lord who believed he had just secured a village. Forevermore, the blades would be dubbed the *Deitus daggers* in honor of the priest whose earnest prayers touched a god's heart and converted a powerful wizard into a child of Pelor.

Each *Deitus dagger* is a *+2 holy*

SLAYER'S

dagger that on command can be used to cast *righteous might* once per day and *searing light* once per day. These spells are cast as though by a 10th-level caster.

A *Deitus dagger* can end the control a master vampire has over its spawn and other vampires. When a vampire is struck by a *Deitus dagger,* the vampire's master vampire must make a Will saving throw (DC 15). Failure indicates that the vampire has lost control of the vampire and it is now free to act as it wills. The master vampire can never regain the control it once had.

On a successful attack roll of 19 or 20, a *Deitus dagger* can also return a vampire or vampire spawn to life. Vampires and vampire spawn damaged by the dagger must make a Will saving throw (DC 20). Failure indicates that the undead creature is destroyed.

Caster Level: 17th
Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *holy smite, protection from evil, righteous might, searing light,* creator must be good
Market Price: 88,302 gp
Cost to Create: 44,151 gp + 3,532 XP

THE SILVER COLLARS OF ADENTRIUS

The Crushing Arms of Kord was a powerful order of knights devoted to the god of strength. Boisterous and vain, they rode black steeds about the mountainous regions of the north, purging the land of evil giants and those underdark races daring to venture into the open air. They were truly a terror to the evils of the northlands.

On a routine patrol around a small village, the knights encountered clever undead soldiers who fought mercilessly and could not be killed. The knights reported that the creatures vanished into clouds of gas, and the wind took them away into hiding, only to return the following evening to fight again. The Crushing Arms of Kord suffered many losses, eventually growing fearful and frustrated.

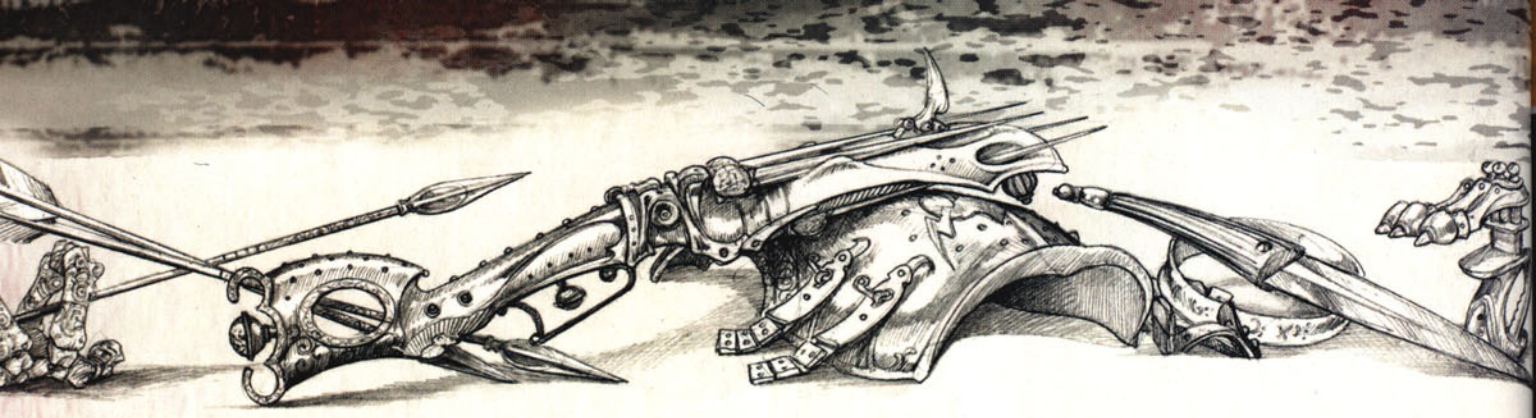
Adentrius, a learned wizard in the village, realized that these undead were vampires. He gathered all the silver coins and jewelry the knights and villagers possessed and retreated into his tower, where he remained for many days. When Adentrius next stepped from his tower, he carried a bundle of silver collars. Forged without clasps or locks of any sort, they were unnaturally pliant and inscribed with arcane runes of crimson. Adentrius demanded the knights pray over the collars and bless each one in Kord's name. The collars took on a magical blue hue, and Adentrius was pleased. He explained their purpose, and the knights of Kord rode off into the nearby hills to slay their foes.

The knights overpowered the vampiric soldiers and forced collars over their heads. The collars gripped mercilessly tight, and the vampires screamed in agony as the Crushing Arms of Kord cut them down. Rather than escape in gaseous form, the undead writhed and smoked as they turned into piles of dust that the mountain winds carried away for good.

Collars of Adentrius prevent vampires from turning into their gaseous forms. When a *collar* is hurled at a vampire or vampire spawn, it expands and fits onto the undead creature on a successful ranged touch attack. The *collar* grips the vampire tightly, and the vampire is magically prevented from assuming gaseous form until the user speaks the command word to release it. The vampire or vampire spawn can break (and ruin) the *collar* with a successful Strength check (DC 30) or escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 30).

If a vampire is reduced to 0 hit points while wearing the *collar,* the vampire is instantly destroyed.

Caster Level: 10th
Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *gaseous form*
Market Price: 7,250 gp
Cost to Create: 3,625 gp + 290 XP



THE COFFIN CLAMPS OF AZIELL MOONCHILD

There was once a vile murderer named Aziell Moonchild who spent his nights gazing at the moon, dancing about the corpses of his victims, and offering his sacrifices to the evil god Erythnul. He was an evil sorcerer whose dedication to mastering the arcane was dwarfed only by his lust for killing. For years the man eluded the law and tortured countless innocents. His method was to capture weaker beings and suffocate them. He drowned them, strangled them, and locked them in occupied coffins or tombs. The most satisfying terror was instilled in his victims by their incarceration in coffins or tombs, but these victims often lasted for hours, pleading and screaming. Aziell buried them alive to finish the job.

Aziell narrowly escaped apprehension when the screams of one of his victims were noted in the graveyard adjacent to the king's palace, and after that incident, he sought a better way to finish his victims by coffin incarceration. After much research, Aziell gathered emeralds, dragon scales, and other components, set up a lab in a vast royal tomb, and began the task of creating a magic, airtight seal. There he forged three sets of clamps. He went on using them until the time of his death ten years later. Ironically, the mad wizard's *clamps* ended his own life.

Aziell had unknowingly accosted and abducted a vampire's intended victim. The enraged undead followed the murderous sorcerer to a nearby graveyard and watched him seal the girl in a disinterred coffin. After a brief battle, the vampire captured Aziell, bound him, and tossed the murderer into a coffin. The vampire then slipped into the coffin with Aziell and ordered a trusted servant to use the *clamps* to seal them inside. The last screams of Aziell were smothered by lack of oxygen as his vampiric captor cackled in his ear. The last vision Aziell Moonchild witnessed, by the light of a pair of glowing red eyes, was of a pale vampire licking his own blood from its fangs.

The *coffin clamps of Aziell Moonchild* were forged in the likeness of draconic hands, each finger adorned with a black marble claw, each knuckle studded with an emerald. When all three are placed on the lid of a coffin, they secrete refulgent green goo that slithers about the entire surface of the coffin, filling all its apertures and infusing the object with nearly indestructible force. The *clamps* can affect coffins (also boxes, chests, coffers, and similar containers with closed lids) of up to 1,000 cubic feet in volume. As a standard action, the *clamps* can be removed by anyone outside the coffin.

A coffin affected by the *coffin clamps* is immune to all magical and natural effects or attacks. It cannot be harmed until the *coffin clamps* are removed or the magic force of the *coffin clamps* is destroyed. The magic force of the *coffin clamps* is unaffected by most magical and natural effects and attacks. It cannot be *dispelled,* but it is destroyed by a *disintegrate* spell and a *sphere of annihilation.*

The magic force keeps out (and in) all magic and all things. Ethereal and astral forms of movement are blocked. *Astral projection, blink, dimension door, ethereal jaunt, etherealness, gate, maze, plane shift, shadow walk, teleport,* and similar spell-like or psionic abilities cannot pass through the barrier created by the *coffin clamps.*

Although not created for the purpose of vampire slaying, after their discovery in a vampire's castle, they were used to seal vampires into their coffins and transport them to places of holiness where they were released and killed by waiting paladins. More clever—or desperate—vampire slayers used the clamps to seal vampire coffins after the vampires had exited them, therefore disallowing reentrance by gaseous form.

Caster Level: 13th
Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *dimensional anchor, forcecage*
Market Price: 37,760 gp
Cost to Create: 18,880 gp + 1,510 XP

BARTHON'S DELVING DOVES

In Elisia, a long-vanished hill country, a community of halflings thrived near the River Banduk. An orange flower they called "heaven's wash" grew near the banks of the river. Its healing properties were known the world over. The halflings harvested the precious flower and made healing poultices to fuel their economic growth.

Alas, one winter brought with it a tribe of vampires who sought to steal the flowers and corrupt the fertile soils beside the River Banduk. They operated by night, quickly and with great stealth, hiding by day in the cliffs that shadowed the halfling community. Halflings pursued the undead to the base of the cliffs, but the vampires crawled up the precipitous, sometimes vertical rock-faces like wild spiders escaping a fire, weaving in and out of the cover of stones that dotted the peaks. Archers wounded vampires as they ascended, but never enough to kill, for the jagged stones were many, and their arrows crashed harmlessly against them. Even worse, spells were thwarted by the vampires' supernatural resistances to electricity and cold. Fear and worry swept through the community.

Then one day an aging sorcerer by the name of Barthon Cray entered town. He had been exiled from the community for wooing the governor's daughters with the aid of his spells. Barthon offered to aid the community in return for a reinstated citizenship and the hand of the governor's eldest daughter in marriage. Grudgingly, the

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governor agreed, so Barthon donated a series of powerful golems to help the halflings guard the flowers. Then he retreated into his secret dwelling to craft dozens of arrows later dubbed *Barthon's delving doves.*

From the sorcerer's arrows there was no refuge; halfling archers crippled vampires as they retreated up the peaks, and halfling wizards cast streams of lightning and ice that hurled the evil creatures to their doom. The vampires moved away and never returned.

Barthon's delving doves were created solely for the destruction of vampires. They feature darkwood shafts etched with silver runes, crystalline heads filled with holy water, and dove feather fletching.

Each *delving dove* is a *+2 arrow bane against undead.* In addition, a *delving dove* is exceptionally good at hitting foes behind cover. When fired at a foe behind cover, a *delving dove* grants an additional +2 bonus to that ranged attack. A creature damaged by a *delving dove* must make a Will saving throw (DC 15) or lose its resistances to cold and electricity for 2d4 rounds. Creatures that are immune to cold and electricity are not affected.

Unlike most magic ammunition, a *delving dove* is not destroyed after hitting or missing its target. Instead, it appears to transform into a dove and flies back to it owner's quiver or hand to be usable on the following round.

Caster Level: 10th
Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *summon monster I, telekinesis*
Market Price: 78,000 gp
Cost to Create: 39,000 gp + 3,120 XP

HEART TRACKER

The original *heart tracker* was crafted by the Iron Leaf, a clan of druids fighting to regain control of Malteth Wood, a forest invaded by a vampire lord and his minions. After its usefulness was proven, the druids crafted many more and allied themselves with a nearby community of wood elves who carried *heart trackers* into battle with taunting smiles and proud declarations of vengeance. The vampire lord Virmiklar and his kin were all but extinguished. Virmiklar alone escaped, vowing to return.

In years following the incident in Malteth Wood, the *heart trackers* lost their appeal and were forgotten, for there were no more vampires to fight. The wood elves migrated elsewhere, and it is believed they took many of the weapons with them. Legend has it that Lord Virmiklar's agents slowly recovered the troublesome *heart trackers* and destroyed all but a few. Some sages wonder whether this is why the dread vampire has returned today.

Each *heart tracker* is a *+1 repeating crossbow of speed.* Intelligent undead damaged by a bolt fired from the *heart tracker* must make a Will saving throw (DC 15) or be held immobile, as per *halt undead.* Non-intelligent undead are automatically held immobile.

Caster Level: 10th
Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *halt undead, haste*
Market Price: 110,550 gp
Cost to Create: 55,275 gp + 4,422 XP

HOLY BONE SHACKLES

A barbarian tribe of dwarves known as the Hunting Wind noticed that their vampire adversaries would not venture close to the tombs of their holiest warriors. Shamans and holy men debated the strange behavior. Finally, it was decided that the tribe would capture vampires and perform experiments upon them, using the unearthed skeletons of their long-lost heroes. This decision, which daringly broke ancient taboos, produced the *holy bone shackles.* Gifted shamans used the bones of their holiest people to make thick bonds that locked magically, and skilled artisans carved sacred images of the Hunting Wind tribe about the shackles. It is said that vampires the world over warn one another of the "curse of the Hunting Wind."

Although originally fabricated from the bones of deceased holy men, these masterwork manacles can be made from any kind of bone. When the shackles are hurled at a corporeal undead with a humanoid form, they expand or contract to fit the undead and bind its arms on a successful ranged touch attack. An undead with its arms bound cannot use them to attack or cast spells with a somatic component, and it automatically fails skill checks that require it to use its arms. An undead takes 1d6 points of holy damage each round it remains bound.

The shackles bind the undead until the user speaks the command word to release it or it escapes. The undead can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 35) or a successful Strength check (DC 28). A successful Strength check opens the shackles; it does not destroy them.

Caster Level: 10th
Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *holy smite,* creator must be good
Market Price: 19,500 gp
Cost to Create: 9,750 gp + 780 XP

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUS ENDEAVORS

Legend has it that the *breastplate of righteous endeavors* was forged in the bowels of the earth by a dwarven metalworker, Furg Ironbrow. It is said that Heironeous himself visited the old smith and warned him that an ancient evil would arise from the heart of the abandoned dark elf city of Liznoberrev. Heironeous granted Ironbrow an oil from another realm of existence. He blessed the dwarf with an unceasing vitality and removed his body's need for rest. Heironeous instructed Ironbrow to forge as many breastplates as he could within a three-month period, anoint the armor with the ethereal-based oil, and sprinkle each chest plate with the blood of seven specific dwarves whose piety impressed him greatly.

Needless to say, when the foretold day of evil arrived, the dwarves were ready. As hordes of drow vampires surrounded the underground dwarven complex, legions of its bravest soldiers were *teleported* into their midst. It was the *breastplate of righteous endeavors* that won the battle, a feat that history has not forgotten.

Each *breastplate of righteous endeavors* is a *+3 breastplate.* All are marked with Heironeous's holy symbol, a large white hand gripping a surging lightning bolt. Only lawful good characters can use the *breastplate's* other powers; to all others it functions simply as a *+3 breastplate.*

For lawful good characters, the armor absorbs the first 10 points of damage per round due to negative energy that the wearer would normally take (similar to the *resist elements* spell). In addition, the wearer can use the armor to cast *bless, invisibility to undead,* and *protection from evil* three times per day, and *holy smite* once per day as a 10th-level caster.

Caster Level: 10th level
Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bless, resist elements, holy smite, invisibility to undead, protection from evil,* creator must be lawful good
Market Price: 61,600 gp
Cost to Create: 30,800 gp + 2,464 XP

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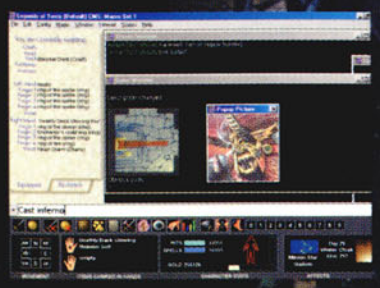

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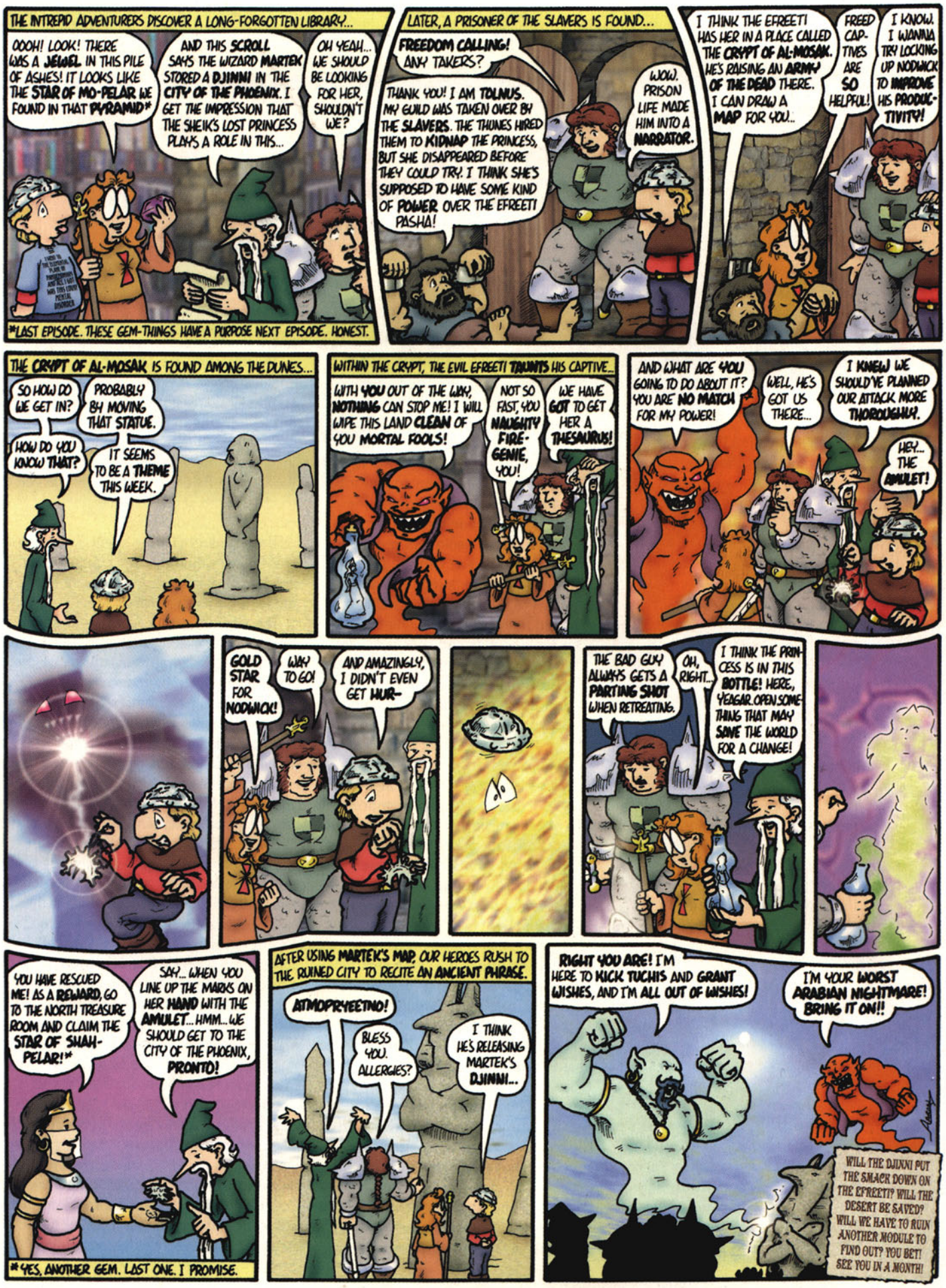
Nodwick
in:
DJINN AND CHRONIC
...AND SO THE EFREETI PASHA HAS BEEN HOLDING OUR DESERT HOME HOSTAGE WITH HIS EVIL POWER AND ARMY OF THE LIVING DEAD! WE KNOW NOT HOW HE CAME TO PLAGUE US OR FROM WHERE.
OH, THAT'S EASY! HE CAME FROM A BOTTLE YEAGAR OPEN-
YEP, IT'S A MYSTERY, ALL RIGHT!
HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED HOW...INTERESTING YOU GUYS MAKE THE WORLD?
AT LEAST WE HAVE JOB SECURITY.
BUT THAT IS NOT ALL. MY FIRST-BORN SON'S BETROTHED HAS VANISHED! SHE BEARS A SACRED MARK ON HER HAND WHICH IS THE MATE FOR THIS AMULET. FIND THE PRINCESS AND THE WEALTH OF MY TENT IS YOURS!
I HOPE UNLEASHING EVIL UPON THE EARTH IN ORDER TO PROFIT FROM DEFEATING IT WON'T BECOME A REGULAR GIG.
LET'S HIT UP THE LOCALS FOR SOME INFO ABOUT THIS SANDY SUBURB...
PRINCESS? WHY NO, MY CULT-ER, FRIENDS HAVE NEVER EVEN SEEN A BLOODY COUP. PRINCESS! I MEAN, SEEN A PRINCESS! HEH...
IT IS GOOD THAT YOU ARE SERVING THE SHEIK. IF YOU HAPPEN UPON ANY THUNE CULT ACTIVITIES, LET ME KNOW. I'VE GOT A NEW "FANATIC MARINADE" I WANT TO TRY ON THE GRILL.
NOPE, NO PRINCESSES. JUST GOOD USED SLAVES-AH, SANDVOYAGERS! YES, LOW-MILEAGE DESERT TERRAIN VEHICLES. YOU GET OVER THIRTY SLAVES TO THE WIND GUST-I MEAN LEAGUES! NOT SLAVES, LEAGUES! I SURE WISH YOU'D QUIT BRINGING SLAVERY UP...
OUR HEROES TURN IN FOR THE NIGHT...
OH, GOODY! ANOTHER PLACE WHERE EVERYONE IS OUT OF THEIR GOURD!
NODWICK? COULD YOU GET ME A DRINK OF WATER?
SURE. I HAVE TO GET FRESH SHEETS FOR YEAGAR ANYWAY.
I'VE TOLD HIM IF HE'D BATHE MORE OFTEN, CLOTH WOULDN'T CHANGE COLORS WHEN HE TOUCHES IT.
AH! A FELLOW CULTIST! READY TO WORSHIP THE JACKAL-HEADED GOD, SET?
HUH? OH! UM, I FORGOT MY DOGGIE BISCUITS FOR THE CHURCH BAZAAR.
OKAY, BUT DON'T BE LATE! AND MAKE SURE THOSE BISCUITS AREN'T THE NASTY KIND WITH CAROB ON THEM!
WILL DO. HAIL SET AND ALL THAT!
I THOUGHT PIFFANY ORDERED A DRINK OF WATER, NOT A TEMPLE OF EVIL!
SO MUCH FOR MY BEAUTY SLEEP.
A-CULTING WE SHALL GO!!
LATER, AFTER MANY SETTITES ARE SET UPON...
YEAGAR, WHY DID YOU DO THIS TO HIM?
I RAN OUT OF CULTIST DISGUISES, SO I IMPROVISED.
HEADS UP! UNDEAD AT TWO O'CLOCK!
MMPH! MMPH!
NO PROBLEM.
HELLO, UNDEAD! BEHOLD THE ALMIGHTY SET, WHO WILL LEAD YOU AGAINST THE LIVING WHO RESIDE IN THAT GLOWING PIT OVER THERE.
UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, YOU JUST PUSHED OUR HENCHMAN INTO A GATE TO THE PLANE OF PANDEMONIUM.
WOULD IT HELP IF I SAID "OOPS?"
SIGH...IT'S A GOOD THING I PUT A DIMENSIONAL HOMING BEACON IN HIS HEAD THE LAST TIME I PATCHED HIM UP...


THE INTREPID ADVENTURERS DISCOVER A LONG-FORGOTTEN LIBRARY...
OOOH! LOOK! THERE WAS A JEWEL IN THIS PILE OF ASHES! IT LOOKS LIKE THE STAR OF MO-PELAR WE FOUND IN THAT PYRAMID*
AND THIS SCROLL SAYS THE WIZARD MARTEK STORED A DJINNI IN THE CITY OF THE PHOENIX. I GET THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SHEIK'S LOST PRINCESS PLAYS A ROLE IN THIS...
OH YEAH... WE SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR HER, SHOULDN'T WE?
*LAST EPISODE. THESE GEM-THINGS HAVE A PURPOSE NEXT EPISODE. HONEST.
LATER, A PRISONER OF THE SLAVERS IS FOUND...
FREEDOM CALLING! ANY TAKERS?
THANK YOU! I AM TOLNUS. MY GUILD WAS TAKEN OVER BY THE SLAVERS. THE THUNES HIRED THEM TO KIDNAP THE PRINCESS, BUT SHE DISAPPEARED BEFORE THEY COULD TRY. I THINK SHE'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE SOME KIND OF POWER OVER THE EFREETI PASHA!
WOW. PRISON LIFE MADE HIM INTO A NARRATOR.
I THINK THE EFREETI HAS HER IN A PLACE CALLED THE CRYPT OF AL-MOSAK. HE'S RAISING AN ARMY OF THE DEAD THERE. I CAN DRAW A MAP FOR YOU...
FREED CAPTIVES ARE SO HELPFUL!
I KNOW. I WANNA TRY LOCKING UP NODWICK TO IMPROVE HIS PRODUCTIVITY!
THE CRYPT OF AL-MOSAK IS FOUND AMONG THE DUNES...
SO HOW DO WE GET IN?
PROBABLY BY MOVING THAT STATUE.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
IT SEEMS TO BE A THEME THIS WEEK.
WITHIN THE CRYPT, THE EVIL EFREETI TAUNTS HIS CAPTIVE...
WITH YOU OUT OF THE WAY, NOTHING CAN STOP ME! I WILL WIPE THIS LAND CLEAN OF YOU MORTAL FOOLS!
NOT SO FAST, YOU NAUGHTY FIRE-GENIE, YOU!
WE HAVE GOT TO GET HER A THESAURUS!
AND WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT? YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR MY POWER!
WELL, HE'S GOT US THERE...
I KNEW WE SHOULD'VE PLANNED OUR ATTACK MORE THOROUGHLY.
HEY... THE AMULET!
GOLD STAR FOR NODWICK!
WAY TO GO!
AND AMAZINGLY, I DIDN'T EVEN GET HUR-
THE BAD GUY ALWAYS GETS A PARTING SHOT WHEN RETREATING.
OH, RIGHT...
I THINK THE PRINCESS IS IN THIS BOTTLE! HERE, YEAGAR, OPEN SOME THING THAT MAY SAVE THE WORLD FOR A CHANGE!
YOU HAVE RESCUED ME! AS A REWARD, GO TO THE NORTH TREASURE ROOM AND CLAIM THE STAR OF SHAH-PELAR!*
SAY... WHEN YOU LINE UP THE MARKS ON HER HAND WITH THE AMULET... HMM... WE SHOULD GET TO THE CITY OF THE PHOENIX, PRONTO!
*YES, ANOTHER GEM. LAST ONE. I PROMISE.
AFTER USING MARTEK'S MAP, OUR HEROES RUSH TO THE RUINED CITY TO RECITE AN ANCIENT PHRASE.
ATMOSPHYEETNO!
BLESS YOU. ALLERGIES?
I THINK HE'S RELEASING MARTEK'S DJINNI...
RIGHT YOU ARE! I'M HERE TO KICK TUCHIS AND GRANT WISHES, AND I'M ALL OUT OF WISHES!
I'M YOUR WORST ARABIAN NIGHTMARE! BRING IT ON!!
WILL THE DJINNI PUT THE SMACK DOWN ON THE EFREETI? WILL THE DESERT BE SAVED? WILL WE HAVE TO RUIN ANOTHER MODULE TO FIND OUT? YOU BET! SEE YOU IN A MONTH!

by Rob Heinsoo

Let's Fight!

If you know how to play D&D, then you already have a good idea of how to play the new miniatures game, *Dungeon's & Dragons: Chainmail*.

Each Chainmail model uses D&D statistics as a starting point. Translate the D&D statistics into a slightly simpler format, add a couple new rule ideas, grab a couple d20s and you're playing D&D as a fast-paced skirmish game instead of as a roleplaying game.

Let's play!

To allow us to jump right into this example of play, we'll skip the important elements of army selection and terrain placement. Later, as you become more experienced with the game, we'll focus on setup tactics.

Setting up Your Warbands

Grab six miniatures or six tokens. Three will represent human warriors of Thalos, three will represent the gnolls and demons of Naresh.

Give the human forces to a friend so that he can't accuse you of taking the best commander in the game for yourself! With 5 Command Points, the Human Paladin excels at leading troops in battle. The two Human Glaivers under the Paladin's command are going to need help against your forces . . .

As the bad guys of Naresh, you've got two commanders (a Gnoll Ranger and a Demonic Gnoll Adept) and one human-sized demon, the Abyssal Maw.

Rolling For Initiative

Every Chainmail turn starts just like a D&D turn: roll for initiative on a d20. In Chainmail, you roll one d20 for your entire warband, not an individual initiative die for each model. If you win initiative, you choose to either act first or to give the first action to an opponent.

For this first turn, let's say that you, the master of demonic gnolls, roll a 14 for initiative and your human opponent rolls a 5. Looks like you won initiative, right?

Not quite! One of the cool ways Chainmail is different from D&D is that it allows your commanders to use their leadership aspect to try and win the initiative even if your first roll was too low. The Human Paladin has command points to burn, so she refuses to hand you the first chance to act without a struggle. The Paladin spends 1 of her 5 Command Points to reroll initiative.

This time your friend rolls a 19! You could spend a point from the Ranger or the Adept to reroll your own initiative, but there's not much chance of beating a 19, so you decide against it.

Ready, Set, Action!

The Thalos forces get to decide which side gets the first action. There are many interesting situations when holding back might be a better move than acting first. As you become a more experienced player, you'll learn which decision is the best for your troops. But since this is your first game, your friend decides to charge.

Each time players act, they can activate a quarter of their miniatures. In this case, that's just one miniature, so your friend decides to activate the Human Glaiver nearest to the Abyssal Maw.

The Glaiver is not a commander, it's a troop. Commanders can do nearly anything you want them to, every time they act, but troops don't always see the battle clearly enough to do the best possible thing at the right moment. To represent this, troops like the Glaiver get fewer choices of how to act unless a commander spends command points to tell it what to do.

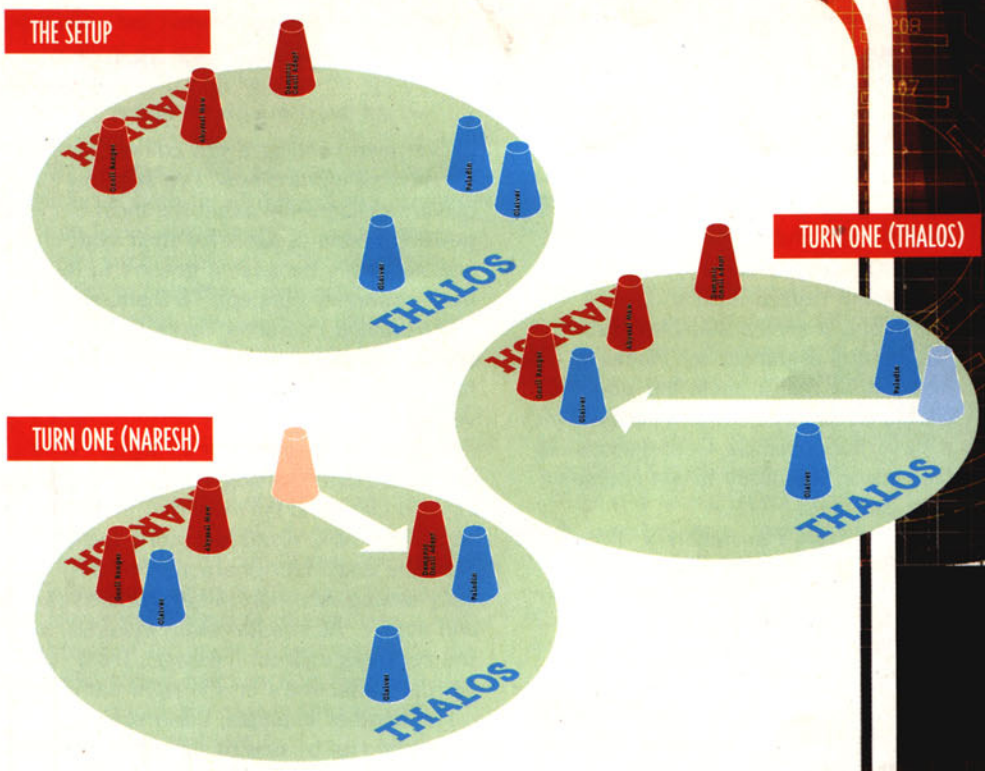
In this case, the Glaiver has two choices unless it is given a command: stand still doing nothing or charge the nearest enemy model. Your Thalos-playing friend gets tricky and decides to spend 2 more command points from the Human Paladin to allow the Glaiver to charge the second-nearest enemy model: your Gnoll Ranger!

The Paladin has now spent 3 command points, but still has 2 points left, enough to maneuver or rally another model later in the turn.

The Glaiver gets a +2 to its attack because it is making a charge attack, meaning it's moving at least 2 inches and up to double its move in a straight line at the target of its charge. The Glaiver's normal attack is +4, so your foe now adds a +6 to his d20 roll to try to hit your Gnoll Ranger's armor of 15.

Go ahead and let your friend roll for the attack. Even if the Glaiver gets a hit, the good news for you is that the Gnoll Ranger is tough. With 5 health, the Ranger can take the 2 points of damage inflicted by a hit from the Glaiver and still have over half its health. A weaker figure, with 3 or 4 health, would have to make a morale save after taking 2 hits of damage. If it failed the save, it would have to flee for the edge of the board until it was rallied by a commander or it moved off the edge of the battlefield.

Now that the Glaiver has acted, it's your turn to activate a model. If you wanted to get fancy, your Demonic Gnoll Adept could cast its *ghost sound* spell against the Human Paladin, preventing the Paladin from using any more of its command points until after its next action. But there's really no need for this. The humans have attacked, now you can respond. The



Demonic Gnoll Adept can charge the Paladin without spending any command points, since the Paladin is the nearest enemy to the Adept.

Better yet, your Demonic Gnoll Adept has 3 command points it hasn't spent. A wise way to spend command points is to use 2 of them to give a model a +2 to its attack rolls that turn. If the Demonic Gnoll Adept was giving the attack bonus to another model, you could hear it screaming commands to motivate its obedient follower. When the Adept gives itself the +2 attack bonus, it shows that the Adept is concentrating on fighting more effectively instead of leading its troops.

You decide to take advantage of this tactic. Your Demonic Gnoll Adept gets a +2 for the charge and a +2 for giving itself the attack bonus, and tries to hit the Paladin's Armor of 19 with a +7 attack.

Resolving Skirmishes

Now, let's say that the Paladin had already taken a point of damage from one of the Gnoll Ranger's arrow shots earlier in the battle. When your Demonic Gnoll Adept hits with its charge attack, the 2 damage it inflicts drops the Paladin's health to 0.

At 0 health, the Paladin is knocked down. To represent this, your friend lays the Paladin on its side. On its turn, a knocked down model attempts a save, aiming for a difficulty class of 20. If it succeeds, the model stands back up and rejoins the fight. On a roll of 1, the knocked down model dies.

The Paladin has a +4 save, which is added to the saving throw. So if the Paladin acts next and wants to get up, your friend must roll a 16 or higher in order to meet the DC of 20. Since the Paladin can't spend any command points when it is knocked down, and since 1 more hit of damage will drop it to -1 and kill it for good, trying to get up looks like a very good idea.

Once all models have acted in a round, that round ends. Reroll initiative and start a new turn.

Tune in next month to learn tricks and tactics to make sure your enemies go down and stay down! D

WIZARDS WORKSHOP

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Non-Antiquated Alignments

While I partly agree with Mark Petersen's reaction in issue #286 to the article, "Do-it-Yourself Deities," (#283) about Hades's alignment, he fails to bring out some facts that mitigate *DRAGON Magazine's* treatment of this god of the Greek underworld.

When I was studying Classics (Greek and Roman antiquities) at my university, I asked my professors whether there was a temple to Hades. Interestingly, they couldn't recall any. Zeus, Apollo, Artemis, Poseidon, Hera, Hermes, Herakles, Athena, and even Ares all had several temples. But evidently, Hades had none, which brings me to my next point.

Mark wrote, "Hades was never viewed as evil by the Greeks, nor was death for that matter." If one does one's homework, however, one learns that the ancient Greeks traditionally never had a positive view of death. Homer's treatment of the slain at Troy casts little doubt that the Greeks viewed death with apprehension. In the Odyssey, the hero Odysseus makes a perilous journey into the underworld and summons the dead by offering them pork blood, no less. The images of this world are dark, disturbing, and desolate.

Mark also wrote that "Hades rarely appears in Greek mythology." This statement, at least, is true, but rather than dispute the article's supposition that Hades is an evil god, Mark's statement supports it. All of these facts—no temple, gloomy afterlife, and rare appearances in mythology—reflect the dread with which the common Greek viewed death and the afterlife. Until the development of religions that gave hope of entry in a blessed afterlife, the common Greek considered death to be the end of all meaningful happiness. Stoicism, like other Greek philosophies, came relatively late in ancient Greek history and was limited almost exclusively to the philosophers and their wealthy patrons. The typical "blue collar" ancient Greek still held an unpleasant regard toward death. Therefore, it seems that *DRAGON'S* neutral evil alignment for Hades is justified, or that at most this god should be simply neutral. Anyone with a slavering, gnashing Cerberus on his front door isn't likely to get chummy with celestials.

Kraig Hausmann • Provo, UT

D&D is a ROLEplaying game, not a ROLLplaying game.

Role-ing Rangers

Regarding the ranger as the weakest class, I find Mr. Wilder's comments (issue #285) typical of people who have forgotten that D&D is a *role*playing game, not a *roll*playing game. A character should be more than an abstract collection of numbers representing abilities. The entire letter is nothing more than a strict by-the-numbers comparison. However, RPGs are more than just numbers. If they're not, they're war games, plain and simple. Now, I enjoy war games, but let's not kid around. War games are not roleplaying games. The difference is the roleplaying aspect.

Mr. Wilder states, ". . . the reasons to take that level in ranger are non-existent." I most heartily disagree. The reasons to take a level in ranger, or more accurately stated, to have your character become a ranger, are many and varied. Perhaps the character is following in her parents' footsteps. Perhaps living near an elven community left the character with a profound respect for nature. There are many in-character reasons. The reason for taking a level in ranger (or any other class for that matter) should not be the numbers. Rather, it should be what's right for your character.

I've been running a 3rd Edition game for several months now. I've seen my players deliberately avoid the most powerful feats or skills for their characters, simply because it doesn't fit into their character concept. To them, a well-rounded character that's fun to roleplay is more important than being the "biggest, baddest mother" in the valley.

One of my players has a ranger character. She thoroughly enjoys playing this class and isn't worried that the occasional NPC druid has more spells than she does. Her character has a very strong devotion to her goddess and nature. As she has risen in levels, she receives indirect messages from her deity that she's on the right path.

For another example, I also play in a campaign run by one of the players in my game. I play a wizard who is about to gain a new level. As much as it would make sense from a "power gamer" perspective to take another level in wizard, due to particular circumstances that have happened in the course of this campaign, my wizard will enter the church of the campaign's goddess of magic as an acolyte. Having petitioned her for help and promising the goddess his service, he's now honor bound to do so since she answered his pleas. This decision will gain my character very little in the way of raw power, but it is totally in keeping with what has happened to him recently and my concept of the character.

There's much more to D&D than raw numbers and stats. Be whatever class you want to be, play your character well, and let the numbers fall where they may.

Morgan Vergara • Austin, TX

Do you Druid?

While I might understand the opinion of some D&D players that the ranger is the weakest class in the game, I would like to express why I would rather play a ranger than a druid.

First of all, the druid's trackless step might seem like a useful ability. However, what if a druid were to

travel into a part of the wilderness that she was unfamiliar with, and then try to leave again? Instead of tracking her own tracks, she would have to resort to either her nature sense or some other magical means to reach her original point of entry. A ranger, on the other hand, would be able to track his own passage into the wilderness and probably be able to find his way back. (Of course, both the druid and the ranger can leave obvious signs of their passage such as pieces of string or piled rocks to help mark their way.)

Secondly, the druid's ability to *wild shape* up to six times a day is extremely limited. Druids have access to only one type of animal, although at higher levels they can choose to be any size of that particular animal, from tiny to huge. The ranger has access to the spell *polymorph self*. At the ranger's highest level, he can access this spell at least three times a day. *Polymorph self* allows the ranger to change into a multitude of different creatures, and if the ranger is of medium size, he can *polymorph* into any size creature from diminutive to large.

Rangers, with their special abilities and class skills, are prepared for survival in the wilderness. Skills such as Climb, Hide, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Ride, Search, Spot, and Use Rope are perfect for surviving in the wilderness. The druid has more magical and personal skills such as Diplomacy, Scry, and Spellcraft. Of course, if you want the best of both worlds, you can just multiclass, but the more "useful" skills of Diplomacy and Spellcraft offered by the druid class might gain a sudden emphasis that limits other more survival-related skills, particularly when druids gain spells earlier than rangers. (The ranger has no access to the skill Scry, but Diplomacy and Spellcraft are both cross-class skills.)

Given the fact that rangers are simply survivors in the wilderness, and that druids are expected to have a spiritual relationship with the land, the saving throws make sense. A ranger not accustomed to dealing with others or with strange persuasive magic would probably have a reduced Will save, while druids, who are an active part of a religious organization, would probably have increased Will saves. This only makes sense, even if it means an obvious weakness to the ranger.

Finally, the ranger has no alignment restriction, nor is he a part of any organization or religious group that might impose restrictions on behavior. The druid, however, is more commonly placed in such situations where not only is she restricted by her alignment, she might also be restricted by religious protocol.

Daniel Bates • Flower Mound, TX

Ugly, but not Violent

Recently, I have noticed many posts to the message boards on the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS website (www.wizards.com/community) stating that the picture on page 41 of *DRAGON Magazine* issue #285 is not the type of art the magazine should display. Some people have even referred to it as an example of "gratuitous violence."

Over the years, D&D products have depicted many forms of violence, ranging from the subtle to the not-so-subtle. I do not believe that this piece of artwork is any different than other drawings we've seen in *DRAGON* in the past. Sure, there is a fair amount of blood in the picture, and yes, it seems the creature's spinal column is in clear view, but I would not classify it as a disgustingly violent picture.

If I am to have any criticism of the drawing, it would be that it is not up to the usual high quality one sees in the magazine. In fact, I think the artwork is quite childish in its style.

Finally, I find it ironic that the people who complain about this picture are also huge D&D fans, and I am sure that there are many times during their campaigns where they have been involved in a bloody battle or two, coupled with some violent descriptions from the DM. Besides, who hasn't, at least at one time or another, stated that they wish to chop the evil creature's head off?

Combat is a huge part of the D&D game, and I find it surprising that it takes a picture such as this one to remind people of that fact.

Peter Jones • Perth, Western Australia

Enough Said

I have been gaming since I was 11, and in all that time, I have never been shy about it. I happily proclaim myself a geek and gamer and have always thought of gaming as an intellectual and creative exercise. If you couldn't get into it, then you needed to use your mind more. Then I started reading *DRAGON* again.

I am starting to feel a little nervous about my hobby; rampant sexism and whining is what annoys me when I watch TV. Now, to hear male gamers get so upset over the use of feminine pronouns in the D&D books is mind boggling. To have someone write in and tell everyone how he docks female characters 2 Strength points to make up for the fact that they have the "power to create babies" is embarrassing. Suddenly, I am not liking my company.

Luckily, the games I have played in have been nowhere near this level of, and forgive my term here, stupidity. I have to keep reminding myself that this is an aberration, that most gamers out

AARON WILLIAMS

"I THINK MY SHARE OF THE TREASURE WILL CONSIST OF THIS DANDY TORCH..."

there are intelligent, creative people who live for exploring worlds and slaying dragons, not a bunch of weird little boys who fear they might get cooties from feminine pronouns.

Chad Riley • Corvallis, OR

Wanted: Hero Seeks Same

Dear *Dragon Magazine:*

I have been a roleplayer for about 17 years. I started with D&D basic, then moved on to other games. I didn't play 2nd Edition AD&D—I tried it, but didn't like it compared to other fantasy games that were out there. However, I love the new edition of D&D, and I have devoured all the books I can find.

In all my years gaming, I always pictured myself as the honorable hero out to do good, save the world, the princess, whatever. Unfortunately, my latest gaming group has decided that they want to play an evil campaign. I am totally opposed to this idea because, as I said before, I see myself as the good guy. The others in my group claim they are "good" in real life, so they want the opportunity to play an evil character. This argument is total garbage as far as I am concerned.

What is so wrong with the world today that people feel like the only way they can have real fun is to be unfettered by laws or morals? When I sit down to roleplay, I'd much rather play the hero than the villain.

Does anyone else have this problem? If so, how have you dealt with it?

Geoff Davey • address withheld

Passing on Knowledge

I read somewhere that the average age of roleplaying enthusiasts continues to rise each year, reflecting the aging of that first "roleplaying generation" that many of us are a part of. As most of us get older, the spare time we have to play our favorite game continues to dwindle, threatening the vibrancy and vigor of the hobby as a whole, and thus potentially depriving the sharp young minds of later generations the experience of this rewarding and stimulating pastime.

With this in mind, I recently took my eleven year old nephew, James, to our local hobby store and purchased for him the Dungeons & Dragons Adventure Game. I sat down with him, taught him the basics of the game, and ran a short adventure for him. His response? "This is the best game I have ever played!"

As I brought him back home later that day, I watched him run next door to his friend's house, his D&D box set in hand, intent on showing his friend how to play, too. I left with the understanding that I had perhaps contributed to the future of a hobby that deserves a very long life indeed, simply by taking a few moments of my time to share it with a child.

It is very important that all of us take a vested interest in the preservation of our hobby by teaching it to a new generation of potential players and dungeon masters, both for the sake of the game and for the enrichment of our children's imaginations and lives. I encourage all of my fellow roleplaying enthusiasts to take a little time to teach a child how to play the Dungeons & Dragons game.

Matthew Stagg • Flowood, MS

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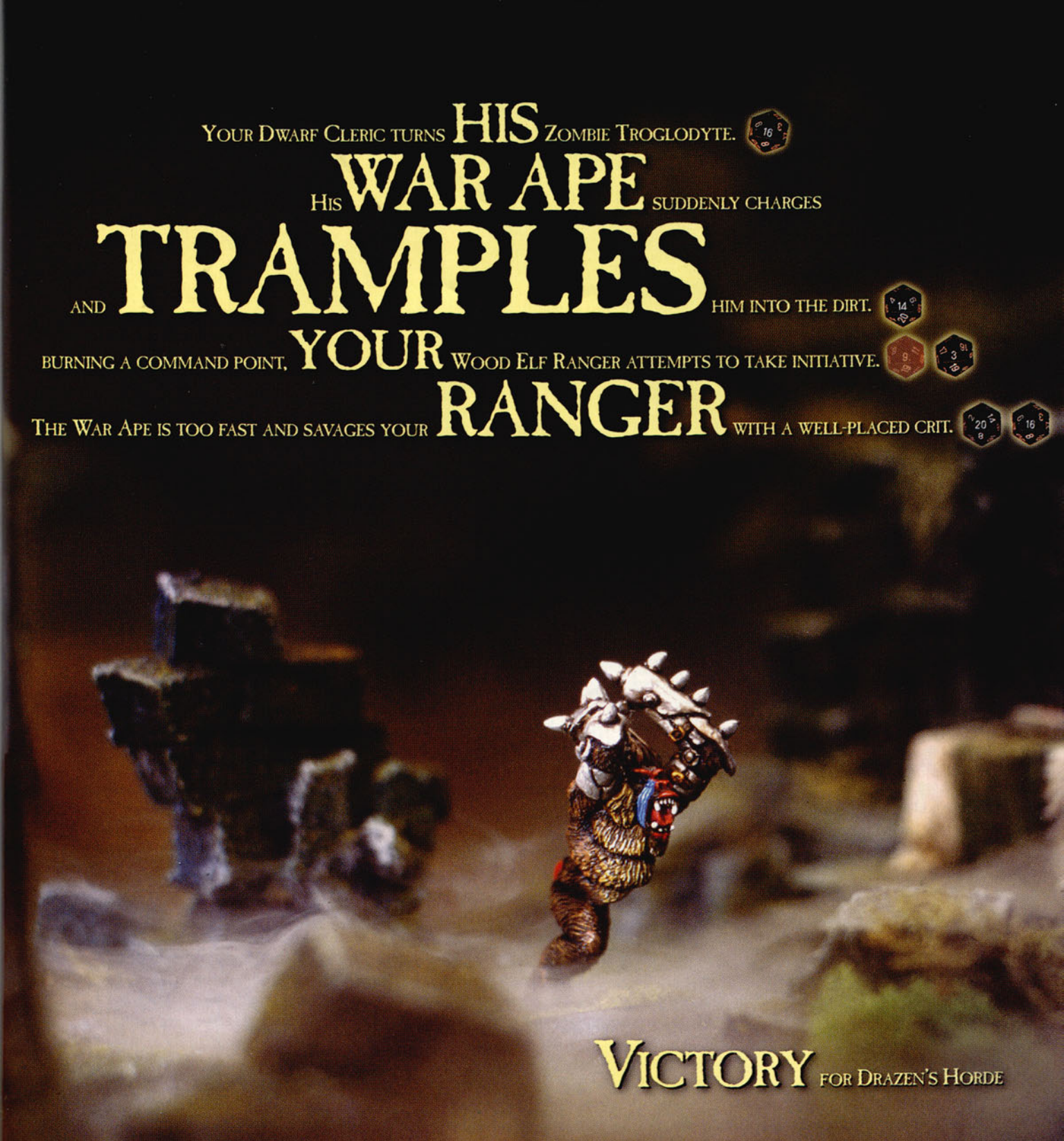

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THE PLAY'S THE THING

by Robin D. Laws • illustrated by John Kovalic

Ability Combos

DM [As Prince Lonic, to a PC played by your buddy, Steve] So tell me of this Uisjor the Mighty, who you would install in my royal household. What sort of man is he?

STEVE [Looks at you, stuck for inspiration; Uisjor is your PC] "Uh, well, Uisjor is mighty. He casts many potent spells and, with them, has slain many of your goblin foes."

DM "Yes, yes, but what sort of *man* is he? Every man has his flaws, and if this one is to stand beside me, I would know them."

STEVE [Out of character (OOC)] What should I say?

In previous installments, we've looked at various ideas, from the offbeat to the obvious, you can use to spruce up your roleplaying of an existing character. It's long past time to zoom in on the most obvious factor of all—those numbers on your character sheet. When looking for an angle to define a character on the fly, the character sheet is a source of inspiration many players overlook.

Sure, everybody knows to play a character with an especially low Intelligence score as the comical dumb guy. Some players are willing to have their low-Wisdom characters make the occasional stupid blunder. A few even throw themselves into fast-talking mode when portraying characters with lofty Charisma scores. But let's take this idea one step further. What about the relationships between scores? How is a character with low Intelligence and high Wisdom different from one with average Intelligence and high Wisdom?

The following descriptions dwell on each type's flaws, because flaws are easier to play than virtues. As always, be careful about playing up a character's weaknesses so much that you annoy other players or make it harder for the party to overcome challenges. Keep in mind that these are merely ideas for characters, not official definitions of how every PC with a particular set of ability scores must act. It would be incredibly boring if game statistics dictated character behavior.

It's also up to you to decide what "low" and "high" are when it comes to ability scores. One player might consider a difference of a couple of points in the two relevant abilities meaningful, while another only wants to look at his most extreme statistics.

High Intelligence, Low Wisdom

"Everyone knows that only the subtropical slime devil is corrosive! Stand aside!"

Intelligence represents the learning of the mind. As a person with a high intellect, you know many facts, indirectly gathered from books or from listening to others. You're good at solving abstract problems, if you can just isolate all of the factors involved. You rely on logic and your store of information to keep you out of trouble.

Wisdom is the learning that comes from experience. Being an unwise but intelligent person, you lack the ability to relate your thinking to the stubborn complexities of the real world. Because you are logical, you expect the problems you face to be logical as well.

Given a choice between what you know to be true from books and what you see with your own eyes, you go with the book every time. Books are your trusted friends; the real world is a confusing and imperfect place. You explain your mistakes as the result of incorrect information. If only you knew more, you think, all of your problems would be solved.

You are happier in a library than anywhere else. You traipse out into the world of dungeons and adventure to increase your knowledge, so that you can write it down in a book for other people to read in other libraries.

High Intelligence, Low Charisma

"Idiots! I am surrounded by idiots!"

If Intelligence represents a character's mastery of logic, Charisma is her ability to thread the treacherous shoals of

TO ESCAPE THIS DUNGEON HORRID, YE MUST SOLVE THIS RIDDLE TORRID:
UH... WHAT IS TWO PLUS TWO?
KOVALIC
UNFORTUNATELY, EVEN THOUGH THE PUZZLEMASTER HAD HAD AN OFF DAY, NO ONE HEARD FROM CECIL THE WISE (BUT DUMB AS A DIRT GOLEM) AGAIN...

human emotion. Because you are long on the former and short on the latter, you value thought over feeling. To others you often appear to be cold and aloof. You are openly contemptuous not only of those less intelligent than you, but also of people who are better than you are at getting along with others. You might mock characters who rely on their intuition, or who believe things that have not been proven. You thrive among scholars and academics who advance the state of knowledge through cutting argument. As such, you might be sharp-tongued even with people who don't appreciate withering sarcasm. And even though you probably claim to be impervious to such insults yourself, you might actually be thin-skinned and prone to nurse a grudge.

When put into a situation where emotion rules, you start to squirm. You can't help yourself from doing whatever is necessary to end such predicaments as quickly as you can, even though you might end up regretting it later. For example, you might deny your attraction to a person you desire because you are more afraid of seeming foolish than of being lonely.

You are happier alone than in a group. You find friendships difficult, so when you do succeed in making a friend, you cling with ferocious loyalty. You might feel jealous or betrayed when your comrade goes off without you or spends time with others.

If you could figure out a way to live life without other people, you would do it. You only join adventuring parties because you know, intellectually, that others possess abilities you lack. If only you could store all of those abilities in some kind of magical device, you could go it alone, and life would be perfect.

Low Intelligence, High Wisdom

"Some say there's a city over that hill, but I've never laid eyes on it."

You rely entirely on your own experience, suffering from ignorance of anything outside of it. You dismiss the reality of anything you can't personally see, smell, or touch. You make fun of learned people, painting them as fools who wouldn't know their heads from a hole in the ground. Secretly, you get anxious in their presence, afraid they'll try to put one over on you.

Whether you grew up in a small village or the densely populated neighborhood of a bustling city, you tend to take a rustic view of things. You trust simple folk over nabobs and aristocrats, never stopping to think that some humble people might be greedy and grasping, or some lofty fellows honest and brave.

You delight in simple pleasures. Whether it's a thick leg of mutton, an honest flagon of ale, or the warm embrace of a fellow pleasure-seeker, there's some sort of physical comfort you crave, and will seek it out whenever given the chance.

Although happiest in surroundings that remind you of home, you sought out an adventuring life to see the outside world for yourself. You're reducing your ignorance one encounter at a time, but there are still vast areas of life you haven't experienced, and do not, therefore, care to venture an opinion of these.

That's it for this month. Come back next issue for more ability combos!

YOU	Uisjor steps through the curtains, where he's been listening in on the conversation.
STEVE	[OOC] Can't I have a Spot roll to know he was there?
DM	[OOC] No, this is too much fun.
YOU	"I am a master of the seven scrolls, prince, and with that honor go certain entitlements. I will not tolerate being discussed in my absence. Even when that absence is entirely theoretical."
DM	[As the prince, stroking his chin] "I see our association will be . . . interesting."

SAGE ADVICE

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This month the Sage briefly discusses psionics and magic and then moves on to consider questions about the new Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting.

Do the soulknife's sneak attack bonuses stack with rogue sneak attack bonuses when using the soulknife class's mind-blade power?

Can someone who has taken the Persistent Spell feat make two different spells persistent?

Yes, a soulknife's special sneak attack power stacks with any other class's sneak attack ability. The soulknife must use the mind-blade power to make a sneak attack. If the soulknife has the sneak attack ability from another class and does not employ a mind-blade, her soulknife bonuses don't apply to that sneak attack. For example, if a 10th-level soulknife with 3 rogue levels makes a sneak attack with a normal dagger, the sneak attack damage is +2d6. The same soulknife would deal +8d6 on a successful sneak attack using the mind-blade power.

According to the table for the soulknife prestige class, imbed power and throw mind-blade are gained at 2nd level, but in the descriptions it says 3rd level. Which one is right?

The table is right.

When a soulknife imbeds a psionic attack in his mind-blade, does the attack stun or deal ability damage to nonpsionic characters?

The imbedded power works normally in all respects (except for target or area). If the imbedded power normally can affect a nonpsionic subject, it still can if imbedded. If it normally cannot affect a nonpsionic subject, it still cannot when imbedded.

In the case of an attack mode, the soulknife must be 4th level or higher (the imbed power ability, gained at 2nd level, does not work with attack modes, as noted in the ability description). A nonpsionic target subjected to an imbedded attack mode is allowed a saving throw, but must use the *thought shield* line on table 4–1 rather than the nonpsionic buffer line. A nonpsionic target is stunned on a failed save and unaffected on a successful save, just as with any other psionic attack against a nonpsionic target.

What effect would the soulknife powers sever life and knife to the soul have on nonpsionic creatures?

A nonpsionic target is stunned, just as with any other psionic attack against a nonpsionic target (assuming a failed save, see previous question). A nonpsionic target cannot suffer permanent ability damage from knife to the soul.

The psychometabolism psionic power *animal affinity* allows the user to emulate one specific animal to gain its ability score. Is the emulated ability score considered a kind of bonus, which will therefore be subject to the rules for stacking bonuses? If it is, what kind of bonus is it? If it is not, can you stack it with other bonuses?

It's not a bonus, the user's score changes. Any bonuses the user might have to that score are applied to the altered score.

Can members of the psion (savant) class use the Search and Disable Device skills to find and disable magic traps the way rogues do?

Yes; however, if you're using the "Psionics are Different" option, a savant can only locate and disarm psionic traps.

If you cast a maximized *summon monster* spell, does the summoned creature get maximum hit points? The same question applies to the psionic power *astral construct*, do you get the maximum hit points for those creatures? What about an astral construct's special qualities that increase hit points, such as buff and extra buff, are those maximized as well?

No. The number of creatures is a numerical effect of the spell or power. Any die rolls the creature makes are not.

How is the *body feeder* weapon quality supposed to work? Do the temporary hit points from the weapon stack? The same question applies to *mind feeder* weapons and to spell effects, such as *vampiric touch*.

Temporary hit points from a *body feeder* weapon stack with each other, but not with temporary hit points from any other source. Likewise, temporary psionic points from a *mind feeder* weapon stack, but not with temporary psionic points from any other source.

In general, any effect that allows you to gain temporary hit points over time allows you to stack those points, but only those points. For example, if you use the *vampiric touch* spell, the temporary hit points you gain from that particular casting of the spell stack. They don't stack with the temporary hit points you get from an *aid* spell, nor would the effects of two *vampiric touch* or *aid* spells stack. If you were to use two *body feeder* weapons (or two *mind feeder* weapons), you could not stack the temporary points from the two weapons.

Exactly which items from the *Psionics Handbook* actually require psionic ability to use? For example, can a nonpsionic creature make use of a *psychoactive skin*? What about a *third eye*?

Items with power triggers require a psionic character with the right power. Items with power reserve requirements also require psionic characters (with sufficient power reserves). Command thought and use items can be used by anyone.

A *psychoactive skin* requires a command thought, so anyone can use it. In some cases, a nonpsionic user won't be

able to benefit from all of a *psychoactive skin*'s functions. For example, most nonpsionic characters won't get any benefit from the bonus power points that a *skin of the psion* provides.

Third eyes are likewise command-activated items that anyone can use. As with *psychoactive skins*, some users can't get the full benefit from the item. A *penetrate eye*, for example, gives you a bonus to manifester level checks you make to overcome power resistance, which doesn't do you any good if you don't have a power to manifest.

How much information does the druid's nature sense ability give you about a creature? Does it apply to monsters with the plant type? Would the nature sense ability apply to fungi, molds, slime, and the like?

The ability works on animals (that is, any creature of the animal type), and normal plants (but not creatures of the plant type). You get basic encyclopedia type information on the subject such as the subject's common name (for example: oak tree, poison ivy, or dog). You discover what the subject eats (if it's an animal) and what its notable abilities are, such as its temperament and special attacks or defenses, and you know if the subject is safe to eat.

You can use this ability to identify things that are neither plants in the botanical sense of the term, nor creatures of the plant type, such as fungi and green slime.

The *detect evil* spell lets you detect the aura of evil creatures but not characters. Are characters counted as creatures with their level as their hit dice?

The terms "creature" and "character" are interchangeable. Any subject with an evil alignment has an evil aura. If this subject has a character class, you calculate the aura's strength by dividing the subject's character level by five. If the subject is the cleric of an evil deity, do not divide the subject's cleric levels. For example a 11th-level barbarian with an evil alignment has an evil aura of moderate strength (11/5=2.2, which indicates a moderate aura). If the character was a 11th-level cleric of an evil deity, the character would have an overwhelming evil aura. If the character were a 5th-level barbarian/6th level cleric, the character would have only a moderate evil aura (5=1, + 6=7 for a moderate aura).

The second function of the *protection from evil* spell blocks any attempt to possess the warded creature or to exercise mental control over the creature. What, exactly, counts as mental control?

"Mental control" includes all spells of the school of Enchantment that have the charm subschool, such as *animal friendship, charm person,* and *charm monster*. It also includes some Enchantment spells of the compulsion subschool if those spells grant the caster ongoing control over the subject, such spells include *dominate person* and *dominate monster*. Compulsions that merely dictate the subject's action at the time the spell takes effect are not blocked. Such spells include *command, hold person, geas/quest, hypnotism, insanity, Otto's irresistible dance, random action, suggestion,* and *zone of truth*.

Would a *protection from evil* spell block mind-affecting spells that aren't from the Enchantment school, such as cause *fear, create undead, gate, hypnotic pattern, mount, rainbow pattern, sanctuary,* and *summon monster*?

No, see previous question.

Can a 1st-level paladin or ranger use a *wand of cure light wounds*? Or must the character have enough levels to actually be a spellcaster?

The requirement for using a spell trigger item (such as a wand) is having the spell stored in the item on your class spell list, not having the ability to cast the spell (see page 175 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Since *cure light wounds* is on both the paladin and ranger class spell lists, paladins or rangers of any level can use *wands of cure light wounds*.

The *Player's Handbook* says that a cleric prepares one or the other of the two domain spells available to the character at each level each day. This implies that the cleric cannot prepare a lower-level domain spell in a higher-level slot. It also implies that a cleric cannot use metamagic feats on a domain spell (since that would require a higher-level slot). Wizards who have specialized in a school of magic would seem to face a similar restriction. Is that what was intended?

No, that's not what was intended, though the wording of the rules certainly implies that is the case.

THE UNSPEAKABLE OAF by John Kovalic
I SEE UNDEAD PEOPLE...
THE SIXTH LEVEL CLERIC SENSE
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Each domain slot can only hold a spell from one of the cleric's domains, but a cleric can use metamagic on domain spells (which makes them fill higher-level slots), or the cleric can simply prepare a domain spell in a higher-level domain slot.

Specialist wizards can likewise fill their bonus spell slots with lower-level spells or with metamagic spells, provided the spells are from the wizard's specialty school.

At 1st level, the red wizard prestige class from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book receives the enhanced specialization ability. The description of this ability says a red wizard must choose more prohibited schools but does not say what gaining this ability actually does. Does enhanced specialization work something like wizard's specialization as outlined in the *Player's Handbook* so that a red wizard gets to cast an extra spell per spell level in her specialized school? Or does gaining this ability simply open the door to all the later abilities the red wizard will get?

Enhanced specialization is something you must do upon becoming a red wizard, there is no benefit (except, as you point out, that it opens the door for the rest of the class's abilities).

If a character has levels in the wizard, sorcerer, and archmage classes (as the Symbul from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book does) can she use the high arcana abilities she gets from the archmage class with any arcane spell?

Yes. Simply indicate which kind of spell slot you're sacrificing for each high arcana power.

What exactly, are the rules regarding divine spellcasters in the new *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book? Can a human become a cleric of a nonhuman deity? Can a human become a paladin, druid, or ranger of a nonhuman deity?

If you're a divine spellcaster of any kind in the Forgotten Realms setting, you must choose a patron deity. When choosing a patron deity, you follow the "one-step" rule described in the Alignment subsection of the cleric section of Chapter 3: Classes in the *Player's Handbook*. Your alignment can be up to one "step" away from your patron's. For example, a chaotic neutral ranger can choose Malar (a chaotic evil god) as his patron, but could not choose Mielikki (a neutral good goddess). Note that the one-step rule applies to anyone choosing a patron, not just divine spellcasters (see page 39 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book).

The Forgotten Realms setting has no rule restricting the race of non-cleric divine spellcasters (consider the notable example of Drizzt as a ranger of Mielikki), and neither does the D&D game. The D&D game, however, requires that clerics of racial deities be the correct race (see page 31 in the *Player's Handbook*), and the Forgotten Realms setting has no rule contravening that. So, you could have a human paladin of a dwarf god or a human druid of an elf god, but you could not have a human cleric of a dwarf or elf god. (Such characters should be fairly rare, however, and it's entirely appropriate for DMs to demand some sort of explanation for the character's rather odd choice of a deity.)

A human cleric in the Forgotten Realms setting should choose a deity from either the Faerûnian or Mulhorandi pantheon depending upon where the character lives or grew up. Note that your choice of deity affects whether you're favored in your region, which in turn will affect your starting equipment and what feats are initially available to you (See Character Region on pages 8 and 28 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book).

When you've selected a region for your character in the Forgotten Realms setting, do you get all the equipment listed for that region, or just one of the items?

Look for your character's region on table 4–1 and choose one item: A, B, or C from the region's listing. If the letter you select includes two or more items separated by commas or the word "and," you get all the items. If the listing has two or more items separated by the word "or" you must choose between them. For example, item A from the Deep Gnome region reads: "Dagger* or light pick* or heavy pick." If you choose item A, you get one of the three weapons listed. Item B from the Deep Gnome region reads: "Chain shirt* and 20 bolts*." If you choose item B you get both the armor and the ammunition.

*Indicates a masterwork item.

Can someone who has taken the Persistent Spell feat from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* or *Tome and Blood* make two different spells persistent? For example could a 10th-level cleric cast *shield of faith* from a 5th-level spell slot (giving himself a +3 deflection bonus to AC) and also cast *divine favor* from another 5th-level slot (also giving himself a +3 luck bonus to attacks and damage) and have both spells last 24 hours (barring dispelling)?

Persistent Spell is a metamagic feat that works just like any other metamagic feat. If you have the feat and the spell slots to spend, you could make every spell you cast persistent, provided all of them are eligible to receive the feat (see next question).

Would spells that have a range of "touch," such as *spell resistance* be considered to have a fixed range and therefore be usable with the Persistent Spell feat?

No. Range touch is not "fixed" for purposes of the Persistent Spell feat. The spell must affect the caster's person (personal range) or have some effect that radiates from the caster's person (a fixed range, expressed in feet).

In the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book, the Bloodline of Fire feat increases the DC of sorcerer spells with the fire descriptor by +2. Can wizards also benefit from the Bloodline of Fire feat when they cast sorcerer/wizard spells with the fire descriptor? Is this feat open to both wizards and sorcerers?

Wizards do not get the increase to spell save DCs. Neither do bards, clerics, druids, rangers, or paladins.

The feat is open to any 1st-level character, but only sorcerers get the spell DC benefit. Spellcasting is literally in a sorcerer's blood; other spellcasting classes learn how to cast spells. Any character who has the feat gets the +4 bonus to saving throws against fire that the feat provides.

The description for the Thunder Twin feat in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book says the character receives a +2 bonus on every Charisma-based check! Does this mean that the character would get +2 on every Charisma-based skill check and on turning checks,

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too? What does having a twin have to do with conducting diplomacy, performing, or turning undead?

The text means exactly what it says, a character with the feat gains +2 on any check involving the character's Charisma score, including Charisma checks, Charisma-based skill checks, turning checks, and turning damage rolls. Having a twin has absolutely nothing to do with any of these tasks, but having the blessing of Moradin (which is why you have the twin), does.

On page 291 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book, the Underdark is mentioned as a favored region for psionicists. The Underdark has its own section in the geography chapter of the book, but the chapter on characters doesn't list any starting gear or regional feats for the Underdark.

The Underdark is not a character region. Strike "Underdark" from the passage on page 291.

I'm wondering about rune magic presented in the new *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book. How long, or what kind of action, does it take to trigger a rune?

A standard action.

Is the layout of the planes in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book the new norm for the D&D game? Or will the old planar layout from the Planescape setting be used again? Is this new planar layout the correct layout? Or is it just the interpretation of the planes that the Faerûnians have?

The planer layout in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book is correct (the residents of Toril are pretty savvy about planar matters), but it applies only to the Forgotten Realms Setting. The standard D&D cosmology is the great wheel (which was used in the old Planescape setting). The new D&D game allows for a variety of cosmologies, and this is further detailed in the upcoming *Manual of the Planes* book.

I'm looking at the maps in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book and I'm wondering, where is the equator?

Look at the world map on page 231. The equator lies roughly north of Zhakhara and south of Chult (Chult is the peninsula that lies immediately to the south of the Shining Sea).

Are the scales for the small maps on pages 117 and 174 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book correct? They seem a little off when compared to the big foldout map.

The correct scales for these two maps is 80 miles to the inch (not 40 miles to the inch as shown on their scale bars).

The carrying capacity for the riding lizard (page 309 in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book) seems a little low for its size and Strength. What's the correct capacity?

The correct numbers are: 233 pounds (light load), 266 pounds (medium load), and 700 pounds (heavy load).

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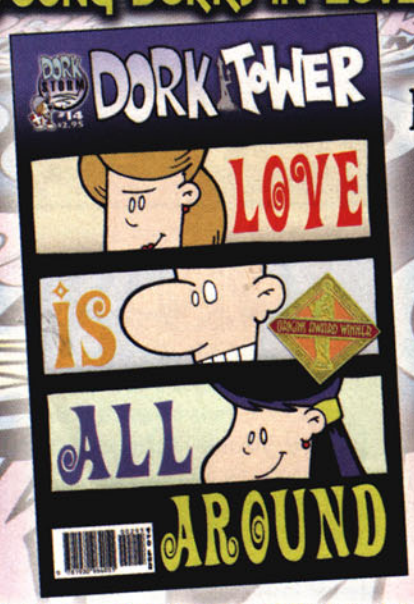

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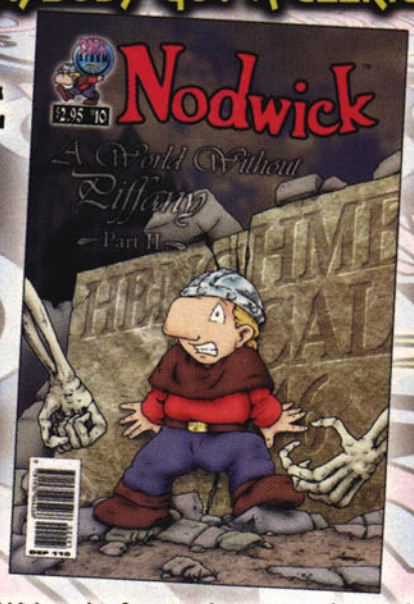

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The Legacy of Baldur's Gate

The Bhaalspawn

by Dave Gaider and James Ohlen

"Submit, pitiful human!" the fearsome ogre roared as its huge blade swung down at Lyana's head. She barely blocked the attack, though the sword showered sparks upon her and nearly forced her to her knees.

Lyana felt a stirring within her, a familiar darkness that surged up from her heart to begin singing in her ears. She smiled wickedly at the ogre and laughed. "I'm no mere human, ogre. I am Lyana, Child of Bhaal . . . and you have made a grave mistake."

The ogre's eyes grew wide as he watched her transform. She grew larger, her hands transforming into claws, her face becoming a horned demonic thing that glared at him with malevolent red eyes. A great beast of pure murder stood before him now. The ogre screamed in terror and turned to flee. The last thing he felt was the clutch of Lyana's talons.

Bhaalspawn are the progeny of the late God of Murder, Bhaal, who was killed by Cyric during the Time of Troubles when all the gods were forced to walk as avatars upon the face of Faerûn. Bhaal had foreseen his death. Knowing it was unavoidable, he planned for his resurrection: He would create a multitude of children in mortal beings across Faerûn, all possessing a portion of his divine essence. On their deaths, that essence would return to its source and his resurrection would become possible.

As the various spawn of Bhaal reached maturity, the most powerful among them envisioned their own plans to steal the mantle that was their sire's. As the Bhaalspawn began murdering one another, it was the infamous hero Abdel Adrian who ended up defeating his most powerful siblings and ultimately deciding the fate of Bhaal's divine power. Rather than claiming it for himself, however, he gave up the essence and allowed it to be spread harmlessly across the multiverse. Bhaal would never be resurrected, and Abdel himself was now forever mortal.

This story is familiar to those who read the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels based on the *Baldur's Gate* computer games as well as players of the games themselves, even if the details of their own stories were different. Whether you are a fan of the *Baldur's Gate* series or completely new to the Bhaalspawn concept, the adventure does not have to end with the culmination of Abdel's tale. The Bhaalspawn who possessed the majority of their dead sire's essence are now dead, but not every child of Bhaal perished.

Bhaalspawn Today

In Abdel's final adventure, many of the Bhaalspawn were killed, but a few remained. These creatures are now free of their father's evil destiny and can pursue their own ambitions. Some might prove to be as wicked as their progenitor, but others might be as heroic as Abdel Adrian.

THE PERSISTENCE OF EVIL

If you want to use the Bhaalspawn purely as antagonists, none of the PCs is a Bhaalspawn. Instead, a Child of Murder is a recurring villain who aims to claim its father's birthright. To do this, the villain must accomplish several goals.

First, it must bring about the death of a thousand innocents. It can do this through a variety of methods: unleashing a magical plague, using magic to destroy a city with an earthquake, awakening and then controlling an ancient dragon . . . the possibilities are endless.

Next, it must recover a piece of its father's mortal flesh; either from the body that lies within the Winding Water where Bhaal was killed during the Time of Troubles or else the body left in the Moonshae isles, where Bhaal's avatar was killed by King Tristran of the Ffolk.

Finally, he must sit upon the Throne of the Gods and be judged by the overgod Ao. The Throne could be located in any number of inhospitable places: the Starpeaks in the High Forest, in the deepest regions of the Underdark, or somewhere on the Outer Planes.

Each of these goals could be a separate adventure with the players charged with the task of stopping the villain.

TORMENTED HEROES

You might decide that one or more of the PCs are Children of Bhaal. These Bhaalspawn weren't killed during the events of the *Throne of Bhaal* as no one—not even the characters—was aware of their heritage at the time. Recently the PCs' birthright was discovered, and they were forced to flee from unknown assailants. In this sort of campaign, the Bhaalspawn will always be distrusted by those who know their heritage.

A campaign in which some of the PCs are Bhaalspawn can have several themes. The characters can be searching for their surviving siblings, hoping to stop those whose evil nature overcomes their humanity (this can tie in with The Persistence of Evil campaign option). Another choice is to have the PCs try to save their siblings from an evil force that wants to kill or enslave them. A more specific theme has the players haunted by dreams that show them the evil machinations of Cyric, the god that inherited Bhaal's portfolio. With this special foresight, the players can thwart the plans of Cyric's followers and soon become one of the god's most hated foes.

Whatever theme you use, be sure to regulate how often the Bhaalspawn saga becomes an integral part of an adventure. If most or all of the players in the group are playing Bhaalspawn, then bringing up the character's heritage in most of the adventures won't ruffle any feathers. However, if only one PC is a Child of Bhaal, then it is important not to overuse the Bhaalspawn plot.

BHAALSPAWN

Able to assume almost any mortal form he pleased, Bhaal did not limit himself to human consorts while spreading his essence across the face of Faerûn during the Time of Troubles. Indeed, some of the most powerful of the Bhaalspawn, those that fought Abdel Adrian in the final battles, were of exotic and varied races: Sendai was a drow elf, Yaga-Shura was a fire giant, and Abazigal a half-dragon.

The Children of Bhaal who possessed the majority of the dead god's essence have perished, but those few who remain can still derive a great deal of power from the divine blood that runs in their veins. This power grows as the Bhaalspawn grows in experience. At the same time, however, that power carries the dark taint of the Lord of Murder within it, and that taint, too, grows stronger with time.

It should be remembered that all Bhaalspawn, regardless of race, have a similar age dating from the Time of Troubles (1358 DR). For a modern-era campaign, this would be fine for a teenage human. Other races do not age or mature similarly and this should be taken into consideration.

Players wishing to play a Bhaalspawn character should note that the Bhaalspawn template has a level equivalency of +2.

Creating a Bhaalspawn

"Bhaalspawn" is a template that can be added to any dragon, fey, giant, humanoid, monstrous humanoid, outsider, or shapechanger (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). The creature's type changes to "outsider." It uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

AC: Natural armor improves by +1.

Special Qualities: A Bhaalspawn retains all the special qualities of the base creature. The Bhaalspawn also gains a number of special qualities according to its Hit Dice (see the "Bhaalspawn Special Qualities Per Hit Die" table below). When a Bhaalspawn gains a special quality (as defined by the "Bhaalspawn Advantages" list below), the Bhaalspawn also gains a disadvantageous special quality from the "Bhaalspawn Penalties" list. A Bhaalspawn cannot have the same special quality (from either list) more than once.

BHAALSPAWN SPECIAL QUALITIES PER HIT DIE

HIT DICE	ADVANTAGES	PENALTIES
1 or less	2	2
2-3	2	2
4-5	3	3
6-7	4	4
8-9	5	5
10-11	6	6
12-13	7	7
14-15	8	8
16-17	9	9
18-19	10	10
20+	11	11

BHAALSPAWN ADVANTAGES	BHAALSPAWN PENALTIES
Bull's Strength	Battle Recklessness
Cold Resistance	Blood Thirsty
Cure Moderate Wounds	Called to Hell
Damage Reduction	Charisma Loss
Darkness	Demon's Blood
Death Knell	Infernal Temper
Endurance	Murderer
Fast Healing	Nightmares
Fire Resistance	Supernatural Infamy
Immortal Soul	Tainted with Evil
Poison Blood	Wisdom Loss
Poison Immunity	
The Slayer	
Scare	
Unholy Blight/Holy Smite	

Battle Recklessness (Ex) Whenever a bhaalspawn is reduced to less than half its hit points, it becomes reckless in combat. Until the bhaalspawn recovers enough hit points to make its current hit point total greater than half its maximum, it receives -1 morale penalties to all attack rolls and AC.

Blood Thirsty (Ex): The Bhaalspawn is so bloodthirsty it almost always attacks to kill, and it attacks as many foes as it can. The Bhaalspawn must make a Will saving throw (DC 20) to attempt an attack that causes subdual damage. Failure indicates that the Bhaalspawn attacks to cause normal damage instead. If the Bhaalspawn threatens more than one foe, it must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 20). Failure indicates that, if the Bhaalspawn has multiple attacks, it must split those attacks among as many foes as possible.

Bull's Strength (Sp): The Bhaalspawn can cast *bull's strength* three times per day at a caster level equal to the Bhaalspawn's character level.

Called to Hell: When brought to 0 or negative hit points, the Bhaalspawn instantly enters a deep comma and is rendered helpless. The Bhaalspawn cannot regain consciousness until it has healed at least half its hit point total. At that point the call to life is stronger than the call to Hell.

Charisma Loss: When the Bhaalspawn gains this disadvantage, it immediately loses 2 points of Charisma.

Cold Resistance (Ex): The Bhaalspawn ignores the first 5 points of cold damage dealt to it each round.

Cure Moderate Wounds (Sp): The Bhaalspawn can cast *cure moderate wounds* three times per day at a caster level equal to the Bhaalspawn's character level.

Damage Reduction (Su): The Bhaalspawn has damage reduction 5/silver.

Darkness (Sp): The Bhaalspawn can cast *darkness* three times per day at a caster level equal to the Bhaalspawn's character level.

Death Knell (Sp): The Bhaalspawn can cast *death knell* three times per day at a caster level equal to the Bhaalspawn's character level.

Demon's Blood (Ex): The Bhaalspawn bleeds a thick, black ichor when wounded rather than normal blood. If bleeding, the Bhaalspawn can be detected and tracked by all evil outsiders as though the outsider had the scent special quality.

Endurance (Sp): The Bhaalspawn can cast *endurance* three times per day at a caster level equal to the Bhaalspawn's character level.

Fast Healing (Ex): The Bhaalspawn heals 3 points of damage each hour so long as it has at least 1 hit point.

Fire Resistance (Ex): The Bhaalspawn ignores the first 5 points of fire damage dealt to it each round.

Haunted (Ex): Undead within 60 feet of the Bhaalspawn are always aware of the Bhaalspawn's location. When protected by *invisibility to undead,* the Bhaalspawn remains invisible and inaudible to the undead but the undead are aware of what square the Bhaalspawn is in.

Immortal Soul (Su): The Bhaalspawn no longer suffers from the negative effects of aging (age penalties already incurred remain) and receives a +10 bonus to saving throws to resist death effects.

Infernal Temper (Ex): The Bhaalspawn is forced to live with a rage that is always held just below the surface, ready to erupt at any moment. No matter the previous personality, once this flaw is taken the Bhaalspawn will become considerably more aggressive and hostile. When it is presented with frustration or humiliation, there is a chance it will enter a rage. If the Bhaalspawn fails any skill check by more than 5 or is taunted, goaded, or humiliated in some manner, it must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 + the amount the check was failed by). Failure indicates that the Bhaalspawn has a loud, verbal outburst of anger and suffers a -1 morale penalty to all skill checks until the Bhaalspawn succeeds at a skill check by more than 5.

Murderer (Ex): The Bhaalspawn has an urge to kill that it finds harder and harder to resist, and this urge can only be quelled by the murder of an innocent. Once every thirteen days, the bhaalspawn must kill an NPC that would not normally have the attitude of hostile toward the Bhaalspawn. This NPC must have an Intelligence of 3 or more. If the Bhaalspawn does not murder an appropriate victim within thirteen days of its last murder, the Bhaalspawn suffers 1 point of Wisdom damage each day until it murders someone. The Bhaalspawn cannot be reduced to less than 3 Wisdom by this damage. The Wisdom damage cannot be healed by normal or magical means. Upon murdering an appropriate victim, the Wisdom damage is immediately healed.

Nightmares (Su): The Bhaalspawn is plagued by debilitating nightmares. Each time the Bhaalspawn rests, it must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 plus 1 for each day that the nightmares were resisted). Failure indicates the Bhaalspawn suffers one of the following effects until the Bhaalspawn rests again (roll 1d4):

1: -2 morale penalty to attack rolls.
2: -1 morale penalty to all saving throws.

TONY MOSELEY

3: The Bhaalspawn's rest heals no damage.
4: The Bhaalspawn has faced its personal demons and awakens unscathed.

Poison Blood (Su): Once per day, a Bhaalspawn that has taken at least one point of damage can coat a weapon with its own blood, causing the blood to become deathblade poison (see Table 3-16 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for a description of this poison's effects).

Poison Immunity (Ex): The Bhaalspawn is immune to poison.

The Slayer (Ex): As a standard action, the Bhaalspawn can transform into the Slayer, a twisted and demonic-looking version of itself that has aspects of the murderous avatar of Bhaal. This was the ability possessed by the infamous Abdel Adrian, and his Slayer form was incredibly devastating in combat.

The Bhaalspawn grows deadly claws, and its unarmed attacks cause 1d10 points of damage. The Bhaalspawn is treated as armed when it attacks with its claws. If the Bhaalspawn already has a better unarmed damage value, use the better value. The Bhaalspawn's natural armor improves by +6, and it gains a +8 enhancement bonus to Strength.

The Bhaalspawn can remain in Slayer form for as long as it likes, but the Slayer form is physically draining. Each round the Bhaalspawn is in Slayer form, it suffers 1 point of temporary Constitution damage.

Scare (Sp): The Bhaalspawn can cast *scare* three times per day at a caster level equal to the Bhaalspawn's character level.

Supernatural Infamy (Ex): NPCs that meet the Bhaalspawn for the first time always have an initial attitude no better than unfriendly. They automatically distrust and dislike the Bhaalspawn, having an eerie feeling that the Bhaalspawn is despicably evil and has dark intentions.

Unholy Blight/Holy Smite (Sp): Drawing on its own semidivine essence, the Bhaalspawn can cast *unholy blight* (if of evil alignment) or *holy smite* (if of good alignment) once per day at a caster level equal to the Bhaalspawn's character level. If the bhaalspawn is neither good nor evil, it must choose which spell to cast when it takes this special quality.

Tainted With Evil (Su): Regardless of it's true alignment, the Bhaalspawn is treated as an evil creature when adjudicating spells, spell-like effects, and supernatural abilities. Thus, it suffers damage from weapons with the holy special quality, spells that detect alignment reveal it as evil, and so on. If the Bhaalspawn is actually of evil alignment, it now suffers damage from holy water.

Wisdom Loss: When the Bhaalspawn gains this disadvantage, it immediately loses 2 points of Wisdom.

Saves: Same as base creature
Abilities: Same as base creature
Skills: Same as base creature
Feats: Same as base creature

Climate/Terrain: Same as base creature
Organization: Same as base creature
Challenge Rating: Same as base creature +2
Treasure: Same as base creature
Alignment: Any
Advancement: Same as base creature except if it has a favored class, it changes to sorcerer. The divine power existing in a Child of Bhaal gives it a tendency toward the natural use of magic.

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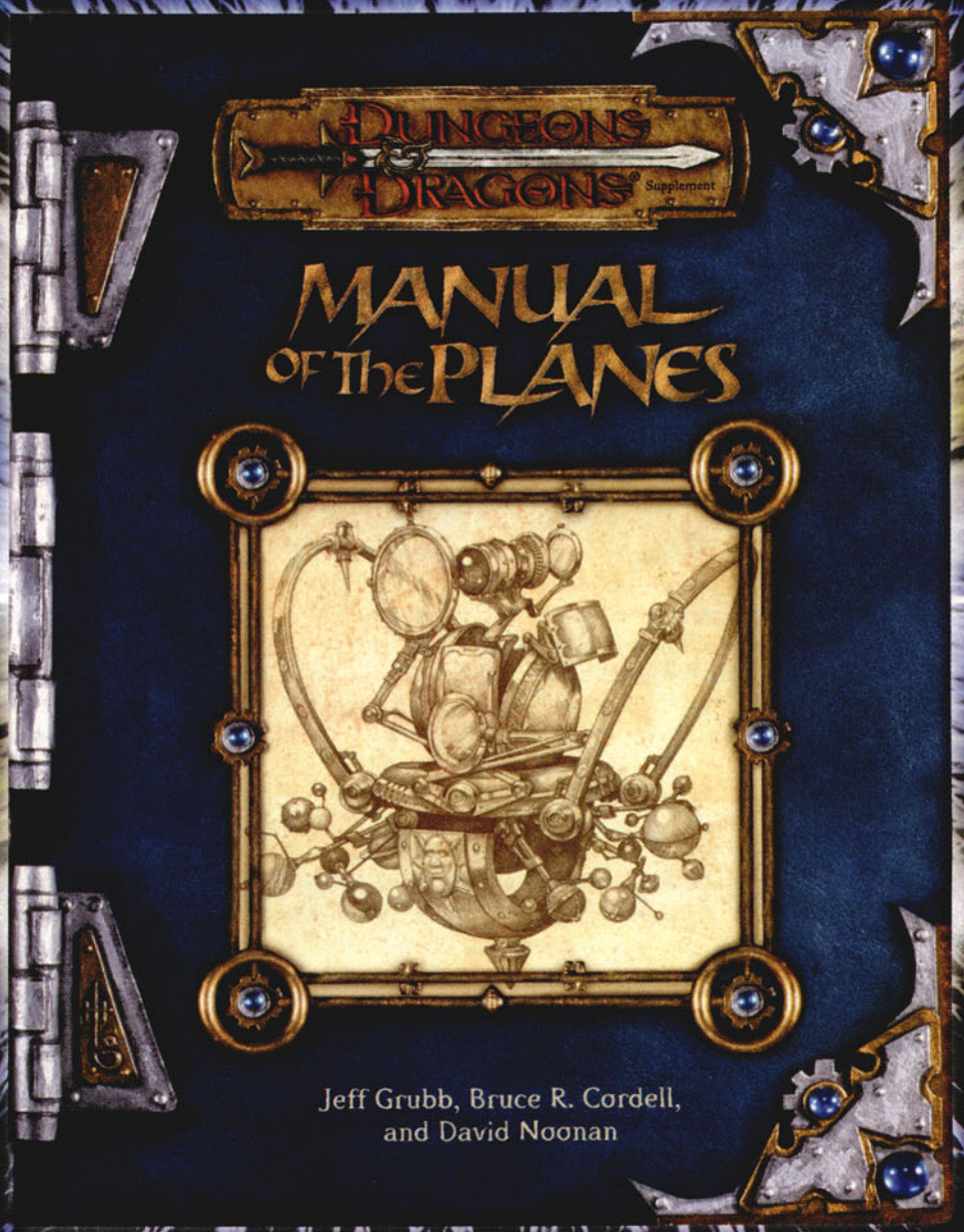
WIZARDS WORKSHOP

PC PORTRAITS

illustrated by Mike Vilardi

My favorite portrait out of this bunch would have to be the succubus. The jagged-teethed zombie came out very well also. The dramatic underlighting achieves the sinister effect I was looking for. –MV

WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED SAVING THE WORLD, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT.



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by Ray Winninger

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Janda's Valley, Part IV

Every month, "Dungeoncraft" explores the fine art of Dungeon Mastering and offers a behind-the-scenes look at the development of an actual D&D campaign. If you've missed any of the previous installments of "Dungeoncraft," you can find them online at www.wizards.com/dragon.

This month, we finish fleshing out the home base for the Lost World campaign. To quickly recap, the valley is home to a mountain stronghold and town that were both founded a few decades ago by Janda, an estranged leader of the Solaani (elves). Since members of the region's various tribes are welcome in the valley, the complex serves as both a frontier outpost and as a center of trade. Although they govern the valley justly and efficiently, Janda and her followers are predominately focused upon fulfilling the strange destiny that Janda has embraced (see issue #285 for a complete description).

10. Merchant Residences. Because Janda's stronghold is one of a relative handful of secure locations in which members of the Lost World's various tribes and cultures interact with each other freely, the valley attracts a lot of merchants. In fact, five of the wealthiest merchants in the region have established permanent homes here. For the most part, these merchants trade in wine, spices, cloth, and rarer items.

The five merchants and their families occupy a cluster of four enormous tents located just south of the pond in the center of the valley. Inside, each tent is divided into rooms by a series of tapestries suspended from ropes that stretch overhead. Between seven and twelve men, women, and children live in each of the tents.

Without a doubt, these are some of the finest individual residences in the valley, and thus, some of the finest in the entire region. The tapestry dividers alone are worth a princely 75 gp each (there are 8-10 of them in each tent), and each merchant keeps a small fortune in silver, gems, jewels, books, fine wines and other rare items in his home (total value of 400-600 gp). As a consequence, the jewelers pay a special monthly stipend to Janda to insure that her soldiers patrol the area around their homes more frequently at night (assume a patrol of four guards passes by the house 3-4 times per hour). In addition, each of the merchants has two live-in bodyguards on their payroll.

All of the guards are 4th-level fighters. Use the statistics for average NPCs on page 53 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Having merchants in the valley is important for two reasons. First, they can serve as patrons capable of drawing the PCs into adventures. These NPCs obviously have a lot of money and an interest in obtaining unusual items. If other adventure hooks don't present themselves, one of the merchants can always offer to hire the PCs to search for a rare item. Second, the merchants serve as a convenient means to introduce treasure maps, scrolls of ancient lore, and other useful items into the campaign.

It's also worth noting that the merchant's houses and the treasures they contain might make tempting targets for thieves, possibly giving the player characters some interesting trouble to get into or some detective work to undertake.

11. Fishing Village. Ten or twelve families make their homes in this connected series of small tents. All of them make their living fishing the stream that passes through their compound. Most of the catch is secured via drag nets and stationary traps, but a few of the younger residents fish with spears for sport. A couple of larger tents just outside the residences serve as shelters for drying, curing, and salting the catch.

Each day, early in the morning, the

older members of the fishing families load up a cart with their fish and head off to the bazaar (area #8) to peddle them. These fish are generally sold at a price of 10 sp and are large enough to feed four (weight of 5 lbs). The fish are salted in a way that allows them to last for up to a week before spoiling.

The fishermen are present to help explain where the valley's food supply comes from. The image of the adventurers riding off on expeditions with bundles of dried fish lashed to their mounts also reinforces the "primitive" feel of the Lost World.

The Residents of the Valley

At this stage, creating specific details about most of the NPCs who inhabit the valley isn't necessary. Take the merchants in area #10, for example. Right now, who they are, what their names are, what they're like, or exactly what is in their homes doesn't matter. Leaving this information vague allows you to easily add such details later when creating specific adventures and encounters. Three weeks into the campaign, you might have a great idea for an adventure that requires the heroes to meet a merchant who has two daughters and specializes in rare spices. At that point, you can take one of these nondescript merchants and flesh him out appropriately.

As a general rule, you should only spend time and effort detailing the NPCs the adventurers are likely to encounter during play, and you should delay inventing specific details until it is absolutely necessary. Remember the First Rule of Dungeoncraft.

12. Watchtower & Bucket Lines. Janda's followers have built a tall watchtower on a low hill on the eastern rim of the valley. In total, the structure is 170 feet high. The first 60 feet consist of carefully piled and cemented stones, while the remainder was fashioned from an intricate lattice of lashed slats and tree trunks. Atop the tower is a 20-foot by 20-foot platform. A single ladder provides access to the platform.

At any given time, there are usually two sentries (identical to Janda's guards) posted atop the tower. These trained lookouts scan the hills and jungles surrounding the valley, looking for attacking armies, marauding dinosaurs, or other potential disturbances. If they spot something of consequence, they shout a warning to a runner (another guard) posted at the base of the tower. The runner then delivers the message to the captain of the guard (usually located in area #9). From their vantage point atop the tower, the sentries' view stretches for four miles around the valley, although the thick foliage that dominates the area makes it possible for well-trained troops or particularly stealthy dinosaurs to come very close to the gates before they are detected.

There is a small watering hole next to the watchtower. This hole is filled via a pair of large buckets tied to a rope and pulley rig that stretches all the way down to the pond in the center of the valley. Using the rig, water can be collected in the buckets down at the pond and then cranked up to the top of the valley rim, where it is dumped in the watering hole. An identical system carries water up to the western rim of the valley as well, guaranteeing that there is a convenient source of water for those residents who live on both the rims.

The watchtower reinforces how dangerous the Lost World is supposed to be. Although Janda's stronghold is a place of relative safety and security, even here the guards have to be prepared for an assault at any moment. The bucket lines are meant to explain how the residents who live well above the valley floor get their drinking water.

13. The Warren. This maze of small tents and lean-tos, known locally as "the Warren," is where most of the valley's permanent residents make their home. Some sixty or seventy families live in the tents here, most of whom work in the bazaar or as aides or servants to Janda's troops or the valley's wealthier residents.

The residents of the warren have a great reputation for their loyalty to each other. Anyone who enters the area looking to start trouble with a resident inevitably ends up facing dozens of them.

14. Caves. One of the walls looming over the western rim of the valley is particularly sheer. Janda and her followers, with the help of some Inuundi craftsmen, have excavated a series of three small cave complexes from this wall. Two of these caves serve as quarters for some of Janda's most trusted assistants, and the third serves as a secure storage facility. Each complex consists of eight to ten small chambers connected by narrow corridors. Secret passageways connect the three areas.

Due to the importance of the people who live in the caves and the goods stored in them, the area outside the cave entrances is always well guarded. One guard is always posted at each entrance, and a patrol of three others passes the area three or four times per hour.

The caves provide a nice, secure location to house occasional visitors or items. Although it's still possible for errant PCs or other troublemakers to enter the caves without attracting attention, you can make it very difficult for them to do so if necessary.

15. Aerie. For a very long time, the Solaani have enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with the pterosaurs of the Lost World. The smaller pterosaurs act as the eyes and ears of the Solaani leaders as they wing across the globe, while the larger flying reptiles serve as steeds for elite Solaani warriors. When Janda left the Solaani enclave, some of these elite soldiers and their mounts came with her. The pterosaurs are sheltered in a pair of enormous pens located on the valley's western rim. Their riders are quartered in nearby tents.

Altogether there are eleven flying knights in the valley and they are the most formidable warriors in Janda's service.

Flying Knight, Male Elf Ftr6:

CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 6d10+6; hp 43; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+2 Dex, +6 *+1 breastplate*, +3 *+1 shield*); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+6/crit x3 lance), or +10/+5 melee (1d8+3/crit 19-20 longsword), or +9/+4 ranged (1d8/crit x3 longbow); SQ *sleep* immunity, +2 on saves vs. *charm*, low-light vision; AL NG; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills & Feats: Ride +11, Handle Animal +8, Spot +5, Listen +5; Alertness, Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Possessions: +1 breastplate, +1 large metal shield, +1 heavy lance, masterwork longsword, masterwork longbow, 20 arrows.

The pterosaurs the knights use as mounts have game statistics identical to those of a hippogriff.

We established that the Solaani rode flying dinosaurs in issue #282. It's important to reinforce this characteristic of the race by making sure that some of the flyers are present in Janda's valley.

16. Janda's Palace: Janda herself lives in a huge palace located on the north end of the valley's western fringe. Some thirty or forty advisors live there with her along with the twenty-five soldiers who make up her personal guard. Although various wings of the main building are both higher and lower, most of the palace stretches three

stories above ground level. Two basement levels lie beneath the palace.

During the day, it's relatively easy for an outsider to make his way into the palace since so many of the valley's citizens visit to receive an audience with Janda or her advisors. After sundown, though, the area surrounding the palace is locked down tight. It's very difficult to enter or leave the grounds without being detected. In any case, it's almost always impossible to gain unauthorized access to Janda herself at any time of the day or night.

Janda obviously needs a home befitting her station. As the campaign progresses, the palace will undoubtedly become an increasingly important locale. Continue to flesh out its description and develop floor plans as necessary. For now, though, just demonstrate to the players that they shouldn't expect to mess with Janda or her followers without getting themselves in a whole lot of trouble.

17. Manors. This collection of large tents and stone houses is home to most of the valley's prominent inhabitants. Among those living here are retired adventurers, scholars, wealthy artisans, and nobles who have grown estranged from their tribe. Almost all of these individuals are even wealthier than the merchants who live in area #10 (assume that each dwelling contains valuables worth somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 gp). Like the area surrounding the merchants' homes, security is tight. Day and night, Janda's patrols pass through the area at least four times every hour and most of the manors' owners maintain three or four of their own live-in bodyguards.

All of the guards are 4th-level fighters. Use the statistics for average NPCs on page 53 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

18. Temple. A broad stone structure that now serves as a temple to the goddess Kalaar overlooks the whole of the valley from its northern rim. Adjacent to the temple is a huge statue of the goddess herself that was carved by master craftsmen over a period of several decades. This temple was actually already in operation several years before Janda and her followers entered the valley. Instead of objecting to her incursion, the temple elders immediately proposed a truce with her and chose to recognize her sovereignty over the valley.

Currently, the temple is home to two priests and three acolytes, all of whom spend most of their time watching out for the residents who live in and around the valley. For the most part, this care consists of providing food for the needy and occasionally acting as guides for travelers who are forced to pass through the dangerous dinosaur hunting grounds located nearby.

Priest, male human Clr6: hp 42; see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 51.

Acolytes (2), male human Clr1; hp 10; see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 51.

The presence of the temple guarantees that the players have somewhere they can turn when they need high-powered healing spells. The clerics' general benevolence and knowledge of the nearby dinosaur hunting grounds might also come in handy—the fact that the priests are sometimes willing to act as guards might allow adventures in locations that are a bit more dangerous than the player characters could handle on their own.

An Asian campaign setting released November/December 2001

www.namscod20.com

by Johnn Four

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Making PC Development Work For the DM

Did you know that you have an abundant, skilled, and enthusiastic resource right at your fingertips that can help you do more planning in less time, flesh out your game world with imaginative details, and create exciting, character-driven stories? This untapped resource is none other than your own group of players who, if given the right spark, would enthusiastically contribute time and energy between sessions to help develop your campaign into one that will long be remembered and enjoyed by all.

The right spark we're speaking of is character development. Your players would probably hesitate if you asked them to create a whole gang of NPCs or to whip up a map and brief history of a kingdom for use during your next session to help you out. However, most players would greatly enjoy short, easy projects that focus on developing their characters a little further between game nights. And if you can make these projects do double duty to help you with planning, world creation, and story development, then everybody wins. Below are five steps you can take to get PC development happening within your group.

1. Decide what kind of development would interest each player.

Different players enjoy different things about the D&D game. If you can focus on this specific interest, your players will be happy with your project requests, and they will be more likely to complete assignments.

10 Character Development Ideas

- ☐ Character history and background
- ☐ Personality
- ☐ Game rules
- ☐ World development
- ☐ Class and career-based development
- ☐ Equipment
- ☐ Magic items
- ☐ NPC relationships
- ☐ Character and player goals
- ☐ Signature spells

2. Create a Small Project for Each Player.

Your players are busy people, just like you, and while they would like nothing more than to be able to spend large chunks of time developing their characters between sessions, chances are that other commitments, activities, and responsibilities push that luxury out of the picture. The solution to maintaining a steady flow of PC developmental work from your players is to create projects that interest the players, are easy to complete, and will only take fifteen to thirty minutes to finish. You are much better off receiving a steady stream of small, completed assignments during your campaigns than to receive apologies and excuses. This will make your players much happier too, because they want to think about and work on their characters between sessions. Your guidance and project management will help them succeed.

If you create large projects, break them up into smaller, fun tasks for your players to accomplish. They will be amazed as the larger picture emerges after completing several of the smaller tasks. It is also important to link the projects to some aspect of character development so that the players are interested, motivated, and rewarded for doing them.

Keep in mind that some of these projects might take some time for you to develop, such as writing up a character survey; however, you can often reuse such things with different players and campaigns, saving you time in the long run. In addition, if you use a little creativity, you can often find ways to cut your development time. For example, a player's first project might be to create a survey that would explore his character's personality or background, such as a mock interview. The player's second project would then be to answer that same survey. This lets you off the hook for making the quiz. Plus, you can reuse it for other characters later on.

25 Small Project Ideas

- [ ] The player must answer a brief survey of multiple choice questions about his character.
- [ ] The player must answer a single, thought-provoking question.
- [ ] The player must create a drawing, sketch, or hand-crafted replica of an original item that his character uses.
- [ ] The player must write up a list of ideas, rumors, or facts relevant to his character or the campaign.
- [ ] The player must draw a family tree for his character.
- [ ] The player must create a map of a particular area with a few details filled in. For example, the village the character grew up in, or the neighborhood of a particular city his character has visited both work well.
- [ ] The player must update the group on new rules, ruling options, and addendums.
- [ ] The player must design a new spell, magic item, or gadget.
- [ ] The player must briefly research a famous event, person, or period relevant to the campaign or his character and present his findings.
- [ ] The player must design an NPC based on the famous person he researched for project #9.
- [ ] The player must gather one or more interesting images or bits of information relevant to the campaign or his character from the Internet, books, or magazines.
- [ ] The player must either draw a portrait of his character or find a picture he thinks resembles his character.
- [ ] The player must design a new, well-balanced feat or prestige class.
- [ ] The player must develop a secret for his character that the other PCs don't know. (Application of this secret is subject to the DM's approval.)
- [ ] The player must write a paragraph explaining where he sees his character after gaining 5 more levels and what items his character would have.
- [ ] The player must write a paragraph explaining who his character's patron is and why.
- [ ] The player must write a paragraph explaining why the alignment his character has chosen is the best alignment. Let the players use chapter six of the Player's Handbook for inspiration.
- [ ] The player must write a short letter from his character to a living relative. The relationship can be congenial, antagonistic, or simply distant as the player sees fit.
- [ ] The player must describe his character's typical morning routine.
- [ ] The player must write down three idioms that his character uses often. These can be the expressions his character uses when surprised, overjoyed, or simply talking informally. They don't even need to be complete phrases; general speech patterns will work fine.
- [ ] The player must write a short synopsis of the last playing session.
- [ ] The player must write a short description of an object that is important to his character.
- [ ] The player must find a miniature that represents his character well.
- [ ] The player must write a short anecdote describing an encounter (not necessarily a combat encounter) his character had within an extreme environment (for example, a burning building, an arctic wasteland, or a humid jungle).
- [ ] The player must write a paragraph describing a moral dilemma that his character experienced before the campaign began.

3. Set Clear Deadlines and Stay in Contact.

These days there are a number of ways to stay in contact with your players between game sessions to discuss upcoming projects. Of course, you could make it standard procedure at the start or end of your sessions to organize and administrate the players' projects, but some groups might not want to encroach on precious gaming time, while other players might prefer to keep their projects secret.

It is also important to set deadlines for the assignments. Without a specific time frame, it is easy to procrastinate, and players might never get around to finishing the project. Avoid setting "or else" deadlines. Remember, this is all supposed to be fun, but do set a time limit that should be met in order for the players to receive their reward.

10 Ways to Stay in Contact

- [ ] Snail mail
- [ ] Email
- [ ] Phone
- [ ] Fax
- [ ] Person-to-person chat over coffee
- [ ] Campaign newsletter
- [ ] Campaign website
- [ ] Online "real time" chat such as ICQ, IRC, or a chatroom
- [ ] A "members only" campaign discussion list using an online message board
- [ ] Plain envelope "secretly" dropped off somewhere for the PCs to find

4. Follow-up with Players Between Sessions.

It's important to check in with your players at least once between sessions to see how they are doing. This will help them if they have questions that are preventing them from completing their assignments. It's also a good way to remind players of upcoming project deadlines.

5. Reward players for Their Submissions.

A reward for a completed project serves as a "thank you" to the players for taking time out of their busy lives to complete and turn in their projects on time. You might consider letting your players know what the reward will be ahead of time—a little motivation never hurt!

5 Reward Ideas

- [ ] Experience points
- [ ] "Hero points" that can be cashed in for rerolls or bonuses
- [ ] A lucky event that will happen to the PC
- [ ] Homemade chocolate chip cookies
- [ ] Additional treasure

Taking this sort of project approach to character development between sessions gives you and your players a number of advantages, including easy organization and tracking, bite-sized goals for busy people, and a way to measure success for handing out those precious rewards. Always remember that this should be an enjoyable activity for your players, not a burden. Consider making the whole program optional so that the players don't feel forced into anything or get stressed out if real life keeps them too busy during certain times of the year. Again, assign projects that are smaller in scope, requiring no more than 30 minutes for players to finish (although players may spend more time on their projects if they so desire), and link the projects directly to the characters so player interest remains high. Assign projects consistently and watch as your campaign grows in richness and depth as the whole group works together, taking advantage of the time between game sessions.

Dragon Mirth

THE UNSPEAKABLE OAF by John Kovalic

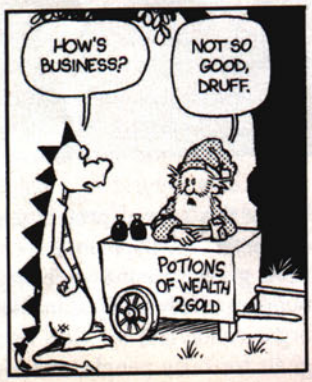
"TRICK OR TREANT..."

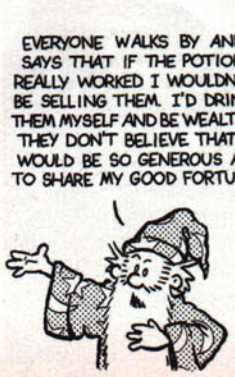
by Aaron Williams

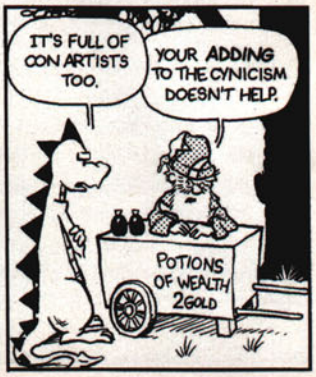
"OH, DEAR... YOU'VE BEEN SLEEPWALKING AGAIN, HAVEN'T YOU, MASTER?"

by Jerry Seltzer

Gunchello




EVERYONE WALKS BY AND SAYS THAT IF THE POTION REALLY WORKED I WOULDN'T BE SELLING THEM. I'D DRINK THEM MYSELF AND BE WEALTHY. THEY DON'T BELIEVE THAT I WOULD BE SO GENEROUS AS TO SHARE MY GOOD FORTUNE!



TONY MOSELEY

More time for Caption Contest entries!

We received so many hilarious entries after last month's winner was determined that we've decided to expand the deadline by a month. Here are some additional entries from last month's contest that were too good not to print.

Next month we'll announce the winners from DRAGON #286. But first, check out this month's contest on page 16.

"How do you know that it's a mystic orb of bouncing +3 and not a Binky's ball of star-spangled death?"
Kevin Lee • Anaheim, CA

"We'll never get in if we can't find a way to get past that bouncer!"
Alexander Shideler • Wauconda, IL

One kickball to rule them all,
One kickball to find them,
One kickball to bring them all,
And in the playground bind them.
Matthew Najmon • Indianapolis, IN

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WHAT'S NEW
WITH PHIL AND DIXIE
HI-HO FOLKS! TODAY WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE UNDEAD. NOW TECHNICALLY, EVERYBODY READING THIS IS 'UNDEAD'-
I THINK YOU MEAN THAT EVERYBODY READING THIS HAS NO LIFE.
QUIET, YOU.
TRADITIONALLY, THIS MEANS SOMEONE WHO IS DEAD, BUT DOESN'T ACT DEAD, i.e., VAMPIRES, ZOMBIES AND 2nd EDITION D&D PLAYERS.
I FEED UPON THE CORN CHIPS OF THE LIVING!
THOSE ARE FOR EVERYBODY!
BROADLY SPEAKING, THE UNDEAD FALL INTO TWO CATEGORIES: THOSE WITH FREE WILL, SUCH AS VAMPIRES...
I MUST FEED UPON THE RICH, RED BLOOD OF THE LIVING!
AND AFTERWARDS— A WAFFLE!
AND THOSE WITHOUT, LIKE ZOMBIES.
OKAY. WE'VE FED YOU 237 BRAINS IN THE LAST HOUR. NOW WHAT DO YOU WANT?
URP... BRAINS... To Go?
SUBJECT #407
AND SO- WHEN LIVE ACTION ROLE PLAYING- THE MOST POPULAR CHARACTERS ARE-
ZOMBIES!!
WHAT?!
OH YEAH- WE ALL SHAMBLE AROUND AND SAY "BRAINS" A LOT.
OH YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE IT'S ALL POLITICS. IT'S FUN- AND I LIKE THE FASHIONS!
ME TOO- ZOM CHICKS ARE HOT!
DCA
BUT WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO BE A ZOMBIE?!
THE RESPECT!
THE EASY MONEY!
THE BABES!
THE BRAINS!
IT LOOKS GOOD ON YOUR RESUME!
ZOMBIES DON'T GET ANY OF THAT.
OH- IT'S ALL EXPLAINED IN THE ZOMBIE JAMBOREE SOURCEBOOK.
25
"ETERNAL SERVITUDE IS COOL?" "WHY THINK?" "A MINDLESS SLAVE IS A HAPPY ONE?" WHY WOULD SOMEONE WRITE THIS NONSENSE?!
YOU'RE DEAD! NOW WHAT?
ZOMBIE JAMBOREE SOURCE
WELL DONE MY MINIONS! NOW FINISH CLEANING THE HOUSE, WEEDING THE GARDEN, AND PAINTING THE FENCE - AND IF YOU DO A GOOD JOB, I'LL TURN YOU INTO REAL ZOMBIES!
OH WAIT. IT SUDDENLY BECOMES ALL TOO CLEAR.
OOOH! THANK YOU OH VOODOO QUEEN SUPREME!
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END
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HURR-!

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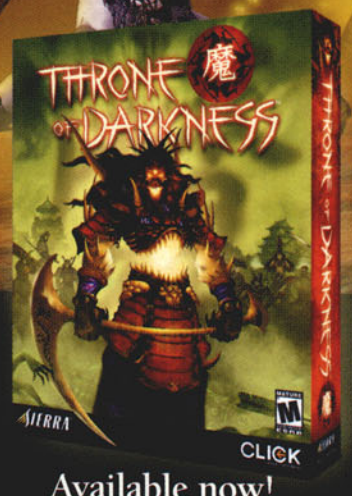

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